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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the six issues of the serial "Voices Rising" issued during the four-year period 1987-1990. "Voices Rising" is the primary networking tool of the Women's Program of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). Articles in these issues include: "Tribute to a Courageous Woman--Nabila Breir"; "Centre for Women's Resources: Building the Filipino Women's Movement"; "Micro-Chip Technology: Its Impact on Women Workers"; "ICEA: Popular Education in Quebec"; "The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education: Highlights of a Seminar"; "Feminism and Popular Education"; "Jamaica: Building Democratic Organizations"; "Lebanon: Supporting Women's Daily Struggles"; "Reaching Women: An Informal Workshop on 'Media'"; "Strengthening Grassroots Solidarity: An Informal Workshop"; "Update on the Women's Program"; "Issues in Literacy in the Urban U.S."; "Building a Women's Centre: Gregoria Apaza Centre for the Promotion of Women"; "Consolidating Voices of Mindanao Women"; "Building Leadership, Building the Movement"; "Our Identity: Feminism and Popular Education"; "Leadership and Women in International Adult Education"; "Strategic Contradictions: Organizational Democracy and Dependence on International Aid"; "Growing Pains: Reflections on the History of Flora Tristan, Peru"; "Summing Up: Common Threads"; "Moving On: ICAE Harare Meetings"; "Zimbabwe: Producing a Popular Text"; "Mali: The Fight Is Ours"; "South Africa: Making Our Voices Heard"; "Refugee Women in Canada"; "Leadership Training and Consciousness Raising among Chicana Workers in the U.S."; "Literacy--A Tool for Empowerment of Women?"; "Khulumani Makhosikazi: Women and Literacy"; "Tomorrow Will Be Different: A Literacy Course for Women"; "Keeping the Circle Strong: Native Women's Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada"; "On the Training of Tutors for Women's Literacy"; "Expanding the 'Generative Word' Process: Women's Iron Will, Haiti"; "Publishing Women's Stories"; "Developing Reading and Writing Skills"; "A Literacy Kit for Peasant Women in Mexico"; "1990 International Literacy Year: Agenda, Comments, Challenges"; "Five Challenges to Women's Literacy"; "Deepening the Issues and Objectives of ILY"; "Sobering Thoughts: Literacy for What?"; "Activating the Network"; "Gender and Popular Education"; "Developing a Balance between Introspection and Action"; "Women, Literacy, and Education in Africa"; "A Critical Moment for

Women Educators"; "Fighting Repression, Building Democracy"; "After the Decade: Trends in Funding to Women's Organizations"; "Playing the Funding Game"; "Exploring the Alternatives to State Funding in Canada"; "Questioning Official Development Assistance in the Philippines"; "Literacy: The Critique from Below"; "Battered Women: Breaking the Cycle"; "Self-Help Groups: Working towards an End to Domestic Violence"; "Knowing Our Rights, Defending Our Integrity"; "Norma Virginia Guirola de Herrera: Her Example Lives On"; "The Asian Women's Human Rights Commission"; "The International Sex Trade"; and "Oka Is All of Us." (YLB)

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VOICES RISING: A BULLETIN ABOUT WOMEN AND POPULAR EDUCATION

VOLUMES 1-4

1987-1990

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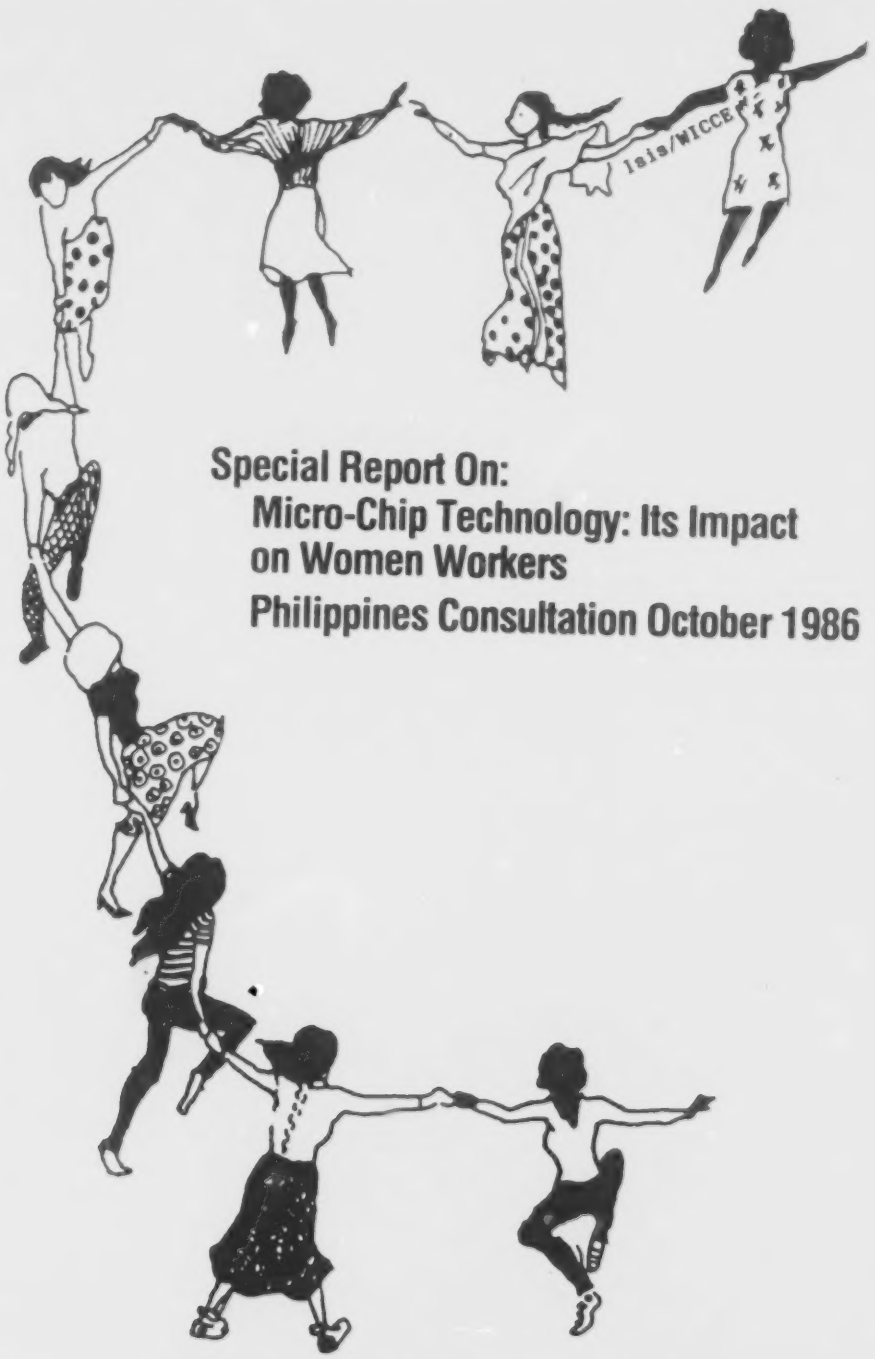
VOLUME 1, 1987

Voices Rising

A Bulletin about Women and Popular Education



Special Report On:
Micro-Chip Technology: Its Impact on Women Workers
Philippines Consultation October 1986

Women's Program of the International Council for Adult Education
may/june 1987

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May/June 1987

Voices Rising:
A Bulletin about Women and Popular Education

The Women's Program works with individuals and groups in different regions of the world who are exploring and developing popular forms of education which reflect and address women's issues. Our aim is to contribute to the development of a feminist popular education that makes connections between broad social struggles, and the personal issues and oppression women face daily.

The Program is presently coordinated from the office of the Participatory Research Group (PRG), in consultation with representatives from various regions. PRG is a Canadian popular education and research collective. We undertake project work with Canadian Native peoples, within the local literacy community, and on the issue of microtechnology and women workers, in Canada and internationally. PRG is also active in an international participatory research and popular education network, and publishes a bi-annual newsletter.

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Voices Rising is the primary networking tool of the Women's Program of the ICAE. It links women working in the broad field of adult education--teachers, learners, researchers, program coordinators, development workers, grassroots organizers and activists in women's and popular struggles. It speaks to women who are working with popular forms of education as tools for social change and the empowerment of women.

Voices Rising aims to:

- Promote the sharing of experiences;
- Provide a forum for discussion and debate of key issues for women;
- Disseminate updated information on useful resources, educational materials and important meetings;
- Foster the development of a feminist practice in popular and adult education.

The usefulness of the Bulletin depends on the input of the readership. We welcome letters, short articles, questions and reflective notes on your programs and experiences. Through your contributions and involvement we can share and build upon our knowledge, deepen our understanding of the issues, and develop our strategies for action.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial contributions of: The Canadian International Development Agency and the Swedish International Development Authority.

International Council for Adult Education
Conseil International d'Education des Adultes
Consejo Internacional de Educación de Adultos
المجلس العالمي لتعليم الكبار

Editorial

We thought it was time for a change. So, our newsletter (now promoted to the rank of "bulletin") has a new look, a new name, and most importantly (we hope you'll agree), a stronger and more focussed content.

The two years during which we published Voices Rising's predecessor, "The Women's Program Newsletter", were in many ways a testing ground for analyzing what type of networking and discussion tool would be most useful to the growing numbers of women we are in contact with. Our readers, mostly in different parts of the Third World, but in North America and Europe as well, are using education as a conscious and integral component of their strategies to empower and organize women. What we found was that women wanted to share their experiences, and perhaps discuss some of the problems they were facing; they wanted to learn from what others were doing; and they wanted to have contact with women and groups in other parts of the world. Women wanted a publication that provided information about resources and meetings, but at the same time offered a space for serious analysis and reflection that could be shared in a straightforward and accessible way.

Voices Rising: A Bulletin About Women and Popular Education is our response to that rather tall order. The articles in this issue speak of women's education and organizing in a wide range of cultural and political contexts. The special section on "Women and Microchip Technology", which was prepared as part of the follow-up to a consultation that took place in the Philippines, offers a more in-depth look at an issue that is having a tremendous impact on women's lives, particularly in South-east Asia, North America, and Europe. We've attempted to highlight some of the different approaches groups are taking in their organizing efforts, and to raise questions about the best ways to build international solidarity links that are more effective in tackling the microchip companies. We hope that the section will also be of interest to those of you working in regions where women are not yet confronting the realities of "free trade zones" or "microchip technology".

You'll notice that much of the material in the Bulletin is based on interviews. Our experience as activists and publishers, is that many of us simply never find the time and space to write articles which capture our insights and analyses of our work. Yet we constantly tell and re-tell those "stories" in different forms to our colleagues, friends, and families. Our work lives are not organized to provide the kind of reflective space that writing takes. We think interviews are one effective method of sharing our experiences and dilemmas without adding the pressure of another task to our already overbooked agendas. Two other sections that will be regular features of the Bulletin are Linking and the Noticeboard, and we look forward to your contributions.

Another important change, is that we are now producing the Bulletin in both Spanish and English. It has become clear that is important for us to widen access to the Bulletin and other Women's Program publications by making them available in languages other than English. We are already in contact with a wide network of Spanish-speaking women, so we felt that production in Spanish was a logical first step. We have also begun to strengthen our rather fledgling links with women in Francophone regions of the world, and to explore how we should facilitate a Francophone presence and involvement in the Women's Program. In this issue of the Bulletin we include an article on the Institut Canadien d'Education des adultes(ICAE) in Montreal, Quebec. We hope that this marks the beginning of a useful exchange with women in Francophone regions of the world.

Of course the usefulness of the Bulletin to us as activists, educators, and learners depends in large part on your contributions. We welcome your ideas and comments.

Tribute to a Courageous Woman – Nabila Breir

Anger, outrage and a deep sense of loss were the feelings shared by many of us when we heard of the murder of our dear friend and comrade, Nabila. We continue to feel sorrow at losing a courageous Palestinian freedom fighter -- a woman who while working with UNICEF played a key role in setting up daycare centres, health care clinics and literacy classes in the Palestinian relief camps of South Lebanon.

Nabila was an activist, an educator, a musician, a dancer and a strong and courageous woman. While in the front lines of different aspects of the Palestinian struggle she was a strong supporter of the women's movement and was active in the International Council for Adult Education, where she helped to create links between women adult educators around the world.

Nabila's contribution to the struggle for peace and justice has been immense. We strongly condemn the forces that have taken this woman from us. To her family, her daughter and the people of the refugee camps in Beirut for whom she gave her life, we offer our deepest sympathy.

For us it was not just the person alone who was attacked. Nabila's murder was an assault on the emergence of a progressive force for social change around the world. In this spirit we must receive strength from each other and rededicate ourselves to the struggle of the Palestinian people and for peace and justice throughout the world.

To Nabila we can say with sureness that your voice has not been lost, for our voices will be that much louder in memory of you and the many others who have died in the cause of freedom.

The Nabila Breir Fund has been set up by the International Council for Adult Education in memory of Nabila. Funds will be used to forge links between women adult educators in Arabic-speaking countries and other parts of the world. Send contributions to:

The Nabila Breir Fund
International Council for Adult Education
29 Prince Arthur Ave.
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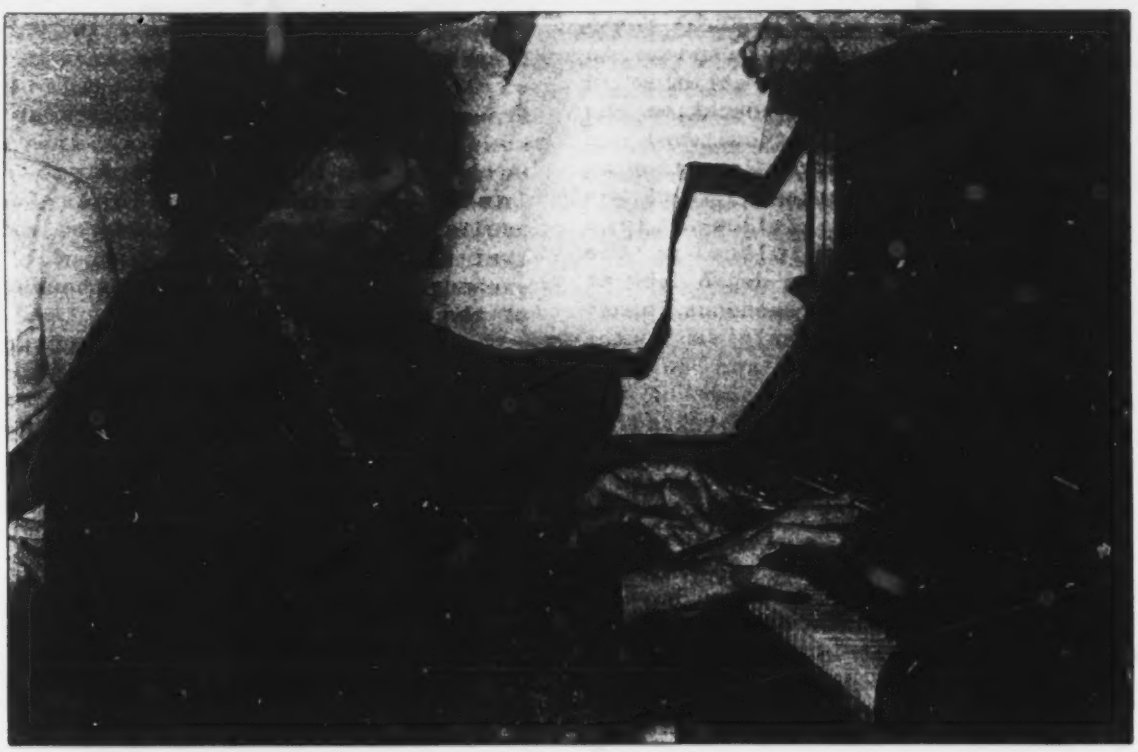

Rachel Epstein

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Centre for Women's Resources:

Building the Filipino Women's Movement

The Center for Women's Resources (CWR) was a co-sponsor of the consultation on the Impact of Micro-chip Technology on Women's Work which took place in the Philippines in October 1986. CWR is one of the oldest women's centers in Manila. It has been operating since 1982 and currently has a staff of six. Like many small women's organizations, the center is squeezed into a small space, bursting with papers, posters, people, and books, all of which are incredibly well-organized. One afternoon, while others from the consultation were off on various "exposure tours" outside Manila, I had a chance to sit down with two of the Center's staff--Cherry Padilla and Tess Vistro--and talk with them about their work.

The work the CWR is doing is thoughtful and exciting. The following is an edited excerpt from our conversation which will give you an idea of the issues they're working on, their approach, and the organization of their work.

Piglas-Diwa, bulletin of CWR

What is the relation between the women's movement in the Philippines and work going on with women within other organized sectors, like peasant, worker or urban poor women?

Lynda Yanz (Women's Program)

CWR: Many women in those sectors are part of the women's movement, for example, in the organizations of women students or urban poor women. It depends on how you define the women's movement. For us, the women's movement is the organized action of women from various sectors of society carrying forward women's demands and the demands of the national liberation struggle. So that when you are a peasant woman, you not only advance the issue of women, or the cause of your sector, but also the cause of the whole people. These are inextricably linked; they are not isolated from one another.

But of course there is a reality that a lot of women who are organized in their own sector are not yet involved in advancing the women's cause. I think most of us here started by becoming politically aware first rather than by being aware of the women's question. And it helped us in analyzing the situation of women to be politically aware.

You usually start with the issue nearest to your heart, don't you? For many women here it's issues like food and housing. Those are the issues very near the heart of many women. And often they don't mind yet whether their husbands are mistreating them or not, as long as the family has something to eat for the next day.

For example, among peasant women, the statistics now show that peasant women contribute a great deal in the different phases of planting and production in the fields. And then when they go home they perform most of the tasks there. That's their problem as women. But they are also affected by the problems which confront peasant men, like the fertilizers. These are problems which can be linked to the capitalist system of the economy where fertilizers are being imposed on our peasant men and women.

So their problems as women and as peasants are very related, and those problems are part of the struggle of the whole Filipino people for national liberation.

I haven't heard you use the word feminism or describe yourself as feminists. Is that a conscious choice on your part? Is "feminism" not an effective concept to

describe women who are politically aware of the women's question and are fighting for women's liberation in the context of the Philippines?

CWR: In one of our stories, we did talk about feminism. But we find that you really have to explain a lot when you use the word feminism. It's just like explaining the word imperialism. And of course feminism has several different strands which need to be explained as well. Whereas we find if you say "the women question" or "women's issues" it is easier. But then in one way or another we deal with it because our society always terms us feminists because we are dealing with women's questions.

There is no Filipino version of the word "feminism". We say feminista. Because in Filipino feminism is nabayismo and that doesn't sound very good.

To date the Center has published four issues of its newsletter Piglas-Diwa (Minds That Would Like To Be Free). The newsletter is published in Filipino and is distributed primarily to activists working in different organized sectors throughout the Philippines, so that they can in turn use the information and analysis in their work with women.

Could you could tell us more about the newsletter?

CWR: Our first issue was on women's production. We discussed the place of women in production, and also the plight of urban poor women, because we see a trend where men are also trying to enter women's fields of work, like washing, and selling goods and foods along the sidewalk and in the marketplace. But we don't know if this is going to help women. It seems that this trend is due to poverty, so that now males are forced to enter traditional female jobs.

Our second issue was about the commodification of women. We discuss advertisements, and how women are used as the selling point for so many products. We have an advertisement here for a local brand of wine using a girl in a bikini, just to attract men to buy this product. We also exposed the practice of so many bars and nightclubs that use women as part of their come-ons. And we discussed magazines, like VOGUE, and comics which are becoming the most popular form of written literature among grassroots people. They function as a very effective control. We call them smut literature. And then we have mail order brides. . .

Q: Are there still mail order brides?

CWR: Yes, in fact just last July there was a picket denouncing this practice when some Norwegian men came to the Philippines to claim their brides. So people from GABRIELA (largest broad-based national women's coalition in the Philippines) and the Network on Sexual Violence Against Women picketed the hotel where they were staying.

But what is important about our

Gabriela

newsletter is that we analyze how women are being viewed by society, how we are always meant to give pleasure. Readers don't just get a description, but also an analysis of what is happening to them. And to do that we relate these problems to the economic and political situation.

What were the last two issues of your newsletter about?

CWR: They are about women and the law. We selected four important codes in our laws: labour, welfare of children and youth, the civil code and the penal code. Our idea was to find out if the much-vaunted idea that men and women enjoy equal status in the face of Philippine law, is really true. And so we analyzed the different important laws. We tackled the labour code and the code on the welfare of children and youth in the first issue, and the civil and the penal code in the second.

We found out that we have a lot of protective labour laws on paper, but that the formulation of the laws was such that they can easily be circumvented by the owners of the factories. For example, the labour code states that women shouldn't be allowed to work at night during a certain time span but the exceptions are so long that they boil down to the fact that women can work at night.

And of course there is a hidden agenda there also. You can just see that society's view is that women should not be allowed to work at night. The view is that women should be at home before the sun sets, and that they are weak and have to get plenty of sleep and rest.

And it is amazing but we also found out that the labour code states explicitly that no discrimination shall be made against women in terms of hiring or promotion. But in reality, the practice of discrimination against women is widespread. For example, the prioritizations of industry in terms of hiring and skills training is still to give priority to male employees and to male applicants. So, it is a double-edged law. It is supposed to be protecting women, but at the same time it is exploiting women.

As for the civil and penal code. . . Laws are one of the best gauges of society's attitudes to women and our civil code is an excellent specimen of a double

Centre for Women's Resources

standard of morality. It proves that discrimination against women really exists in our laws. For example, in the civil code it explicitly states that women should manage the home and men should be the bread winners. And to enforce that view, there are a lot of restrictions imposed on women when they get married. The husband can say that his wife must not engage in any paid work, or in any endeavour against his wishes. That means if the wife is a professional when she gets married but her husband tells her not to work anymore, the law is going to support him. And there is even a very weird provision in the civil code--that when the husband dies the woman cannot marry unless it is stated in the husband's will that she can marry.

Can a husband marry after his wife dies?

CWR: Yes, of course. There is no restriction on him. And also the wife cannot accept gifts or any donations from anybody except relatives within the extended family. So the title of our article is "Getting Married is the Institutionalization of Male Domination." Because once a girl gets married there are a lot of restrictions imposed on her. She has to use the surname of her husband, she has to stay at home and manage the home and care for the children, and she cannot buy any valuable property without the consent of her husband.

The Penal Code is similar. In the Philippines a woman can go to prison if she is caught committing adultery, but a man

can't. A man can only be charged with concubinage, which is harder to prove than adultery. And for concubinage you have to prove that your husband is living with another woman under one roof and that he is actually supporting her.

Inang Malaya

How do you decide on themes for the newsletter?

CWR: We decided on "women and the law" because of the Constitutional Commission. We saw it as our contribution to making the laws more responsive to women. We started work on this during the time when the Constitutional Commission was just beginning to talk about laws and women, and they were focusing on the pro-life issue, instead of the discrimination that already exists in our laws. We also choose issues that will act as a further substantiation of topics we have in our training modules for women. So for example we have a section on women and the law.

The training module on Women's Issues, Demands and Directions is one of your current priorities isn't it? Could you describe it a bit?

CWR: The module is first and foremost a basic orientation to the women's question in the Philippines. Through the module, and in the trainers' training for the module, we want to provide an orientation to the women's question and to organizing and waging campaigns. The training trainers' component is very important because it's geared to preparing organizers to reproduce the module in their work and with their communities.

The whole module takes three days; it's a live-in workshop with a minimum of 30 participants. We also have short orientation courses of three to four hours.

Have you done any of the workshops yet?

CWR: The module is not finished, but so far we have carried out five pilot trainers' training sessions with urban poor women, workers, peasants, and professionals. We are using those experiences to improve the module and the training trainers kit.

The module itself is seen as a first step in women becoming conscious of their oppression as women. This is also the starting point for the training workshops. The idea is that women organizers are being trained to be able to give the module to the grassroots women they work with. Because some of them don't have a clear grasp of the women's question, we firstly give them a basic orientation (the module itself) before going into the trainers' training.

The trainers' training session can change quite a bit depending on where the participants are coming from. For example if our audience is purely peasant women, then we will want to spend more time understanding that sector.

Is it best to do a trainers' training session with one sector, like working women or peasant women, or do you mix women from different sectors?

CWR: From our experience, it is very enriching to have a mixed session with women workers, students, peasants, and professionals, but you have to be careful of their different levels of political awareness. You really have to pinpoint both their level of political awareness and their women's consciousness, because these are two very different things. There are women who are politically aware and yet are not at all aware of the issues that affect them as women, and they may claim that they are not oppressed.

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Let's talk more about the module? How is it organized? What does it cover?

CWR: There are two main sections to the module. The first consists of the awareness of the self, awareness of the body, the socialization process of women, man/woman relations, conditions of women in different sectors, and women and the law. The second part consists of the historical roots of women's oppression, women's organized action, the demands of women, different venues for organized action, and the role of the women's movement in the movement for national emancipation and women's emancipation. That last part is where we give our vision of a women's movement.

We felt we had to start first with women's own experiences and move from there to begin to synthesize the issues. For example, in the awareness of the self we discuss women's role in their families, how they are seen, and how they were brought up. And here you find commonalities in the experiences of women, even though they come from different class backgrounds.

We always start there because we feel it doesn't make sense to start from the abstract, telling women "these are your issues" without them really feeling it. We have all experienced that approach, where you're told "do not tell us what you feel". You can't start educating people by saying "you are oppressed", this would end the discussion.

Another example is the awareness of the body. Why is it important to know our bodies?. Because it is connected with the issue of reproduction and the reality that we don't have control over reproduction. We start our discussions with activities that help women know and reflect on their bodies and then synthesize their experiences--what they have felt and thought during the exercises. We start from the premise that it is important to know your body and then we go into why women don't have control over their own reproductive system. After that we go to their environment and to the level of society, like multinational corporations, and big hospitals.

We also look at traditional views of society that say that women should only bear and take care of children, even if the women don't want to have children yet. Often they've had the experience of the men forcing them to have sex, even if the women don't want to. But the reality is that women often just give in to the wishes of their husbands because they fear that their husbands would leave them, and because of their conditioning that teaches them that they really should give in to their husband's wishes or else it's their fault for breaking up the family.

And of course, we also look at the importance of women being economically independent of men. So in discussing the body we already have gone into various aspects of the women's question and women's issues.

After a discussion like that we often go into a historical review--what were the conditions of women in the past? did they enjoy the same privileges as men, or not? Is women's oppression an isolated phenomenon, or it is rooted in the conditions of women in the past? How did women's problems develop? At what point in time in Philippines history did the institutionalization of the oppression of women begin?

What kind of a change do you expect from participants after going through the two days?

CWR: We always start the workshop with participants giving their own expectations, which usually are something like, "I would like to learn more about why we are oppressed." And, "we would like to tell what we have learned to other women." So

Gabriela

there is a continuum. That's why the trainers' training is important, so that they themselves can be the ones to give this to women in their organizations.
We end with "venues for organized action"--how to fight for your demands. We teach them that there are different venues through which to push forward the women question. In your family you can have a heart-to-heart talk with your husband, or you can talk with your neighbours and your friends. We always emphasize that you don't have to go out and attend meetings and leave your family. No, in their own small way they can contribute to the advancement of the women's movement.

We had wanted to include a discussion on the women's movement in the different countries of the world but don't have the proper resource materials. But it would be interesting: how do women advance their liberation in developed countries for example as compared to the Third World countries?

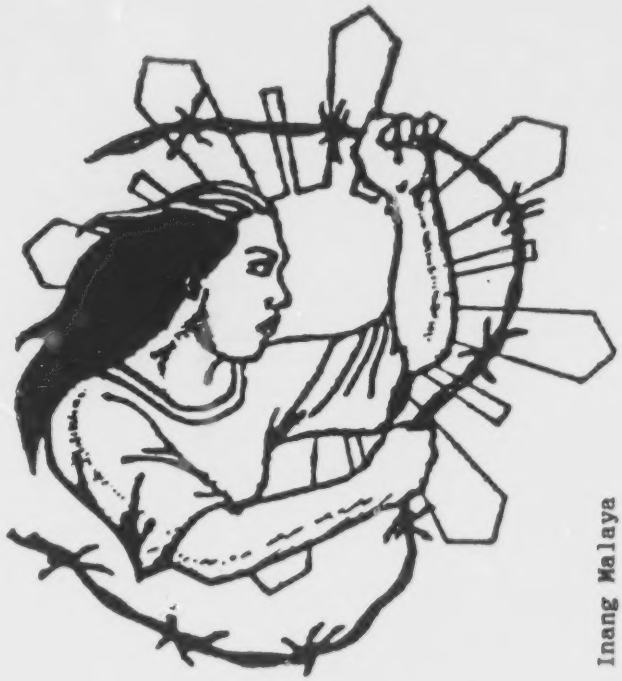
Let's talk about CWR and how it's organized. How are priorities set? How is work organized among the staff?

CWR: The Center has a board that consists of 17 members, and then we have an executive staff of four, and the junior staff: the messenger, the secretary and the librarian. The senior staff decide on the priorities and programs for the year, and present them to the Board.

In terms of the division of labour, each one of us has major areas or committees of responsibility. These are divided into research, education and training, publications, administration and international concerns. Carol, one of the senior staff, is the executive director.

We feel it is important to pinpoint the responsibilities of each one of us, rather than functioning on a voluntarist basis by assuming responsibilities as they come along. We felt it important to delineate responsibilities in order to ensure that our programs and activities within programs are done on time and with results.

Of course, the division is not that rigid. We help each other a lot. For example, our education modules come under education and training, and each of us is responsible for writing a section in the



Inang Malaya

module. We collectively discuss each topic and how to present it, and then we divide the topics. But as the education and training coordinator, Tess is responsible for making sure that the project finishes on time. If it doesn't then we assess why.

Do the four of you do all the research and writing yourselves?

CWR: No, it's just too hard to maintain a large staff. There are a number of researchers and writers who work with us on a project basis. The senior staff provide the framework and overall analysis and also do the final editing. So for our radio programs, we hired an anchor-person and program manager to manage the technical aspects, do the script writing, and make sure the program is running smoothly. But the planning, the setting of objectives and topics to be discussed, deciding on guests and making interview plans, we do that together with the program person.

Has the Center grown and changed a lot in the last few years?

CWR: Yes, when it was first established we carried out a lot of different activities.

We were organizing, and leading campaigns. That was before many of the other women's groups had formed and it precipitated a kind of identity crisis. But right now we are narrowing the tasks of the Center to education, training, and research. By delineating these tasks we have been able to concentrate more on what the Center should be doing, on being a resource center for women.

It sounds like you are a support to organizations working with and organizing women, rather than doing organizing work yourselves?

CWR: Yes, rather than doing organizing work ourselves we provide research, education and skills training.

For more information on CWR and its work please contact:

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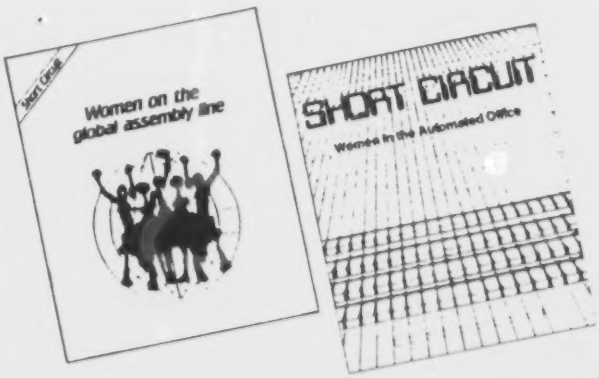

Short Circuit: Women on the Global Assembly Line (39pages, 1985)

The booklet takes a hard look at the steps involved in the assembly of micro-electronics products. From the manufacturing of tiny silicon wafers to the fully assembled word processor, women all over the world play a critical role in the assembly and use of microelectronic equipment. Direct quotes and personal stories document the harsh working conditions, isolation, low wages and chronic job insecurity of women working in the silicon chip assembly plants of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Central America and Africa.

Short Circuit: Women in the Automated Office (49pages, 1985)

Word processors, electronic mail, and work stations are no longer the domain of large corporations, as small and medium-size firms increasingly discover the new technology. What do these changes mean for women? How will they affect the quality of our working lives?

Written in a clear, straightforward style, Women in the Automated Office takes a look at some of the key issues that face any woman caught in the middle of workplace changes. It outlines the size and scope of the changes and breaks down the areas in which women office workers can make informed and organized contributions to the changes planned by management. The booklet ends by exploring the steps that women workers can take to protect our jobs and our health.

Each publication costs $4.00 and can be obtained by writing to:

Participatory Research Group
229 College Street, Suite 309
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 1R2

Notice Board

African Association for Literacy and Adult Education

The African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) has established four networks through which program activities will be implemented across the continent: training, literacy, environmental education and women adult educators.

Thelma Awori has been named Convenor of the women's network. At the time of the AALAE's first General Assembly in July 1987, Thelma will meet with key women from different regions in the network for discussion of programs and priorities for women in Africa. Further information on the women's network or the AALAE is available from:

Thelma Awori
AALAE
P.O. Box 50768
Nairobi, Kenya

A Seminar on Literacy in the Industrialized Countries, October 3-16 1987

The International Council for Adult Education is holding an International Seminar on "Literacy in the Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice". The Seminar will be held in Toronto, Canada, October 13-16, 1987.

The main objective of the Seminar is to provide a forum for discussion of literacy strategies, methods and practices for practitioners, advocates, researchers and policy makers. Participation in the Seminar is limited to 150 international participants from industrialized countries and 150 Canadian participants. For more information on registration and program details, please contact the ICAE before June 15th:

The ICAE Seminar Planning Committee
29 Prince Arthur Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5R 1B2

Micro-Chip Technology:
It's Impact on Women Workers

This special section was compiled by Rachel Epstein who is a member of the Participatory Research Group.

In October, forty women from twelve countries gathered in the Philippines for a ten-day meeting called ***Micro-chip Technology: Its Impact on the Lives of Women Workers****. The meeting was organized jointly by the Women's Program of the ICAE; three women's groups in the Philippines: the Center for Women's Resources, the Women's Center, and the KMK (women workers' movement); and the Participatory Research Group in Canada.*

Participants were workers, educators, and organizers who work directly with women affected by the new international division of labour or "global assembly line" that has developed as part of the microelectronics industry. They came from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan, the Netherlands, Trinidad, Jamaica, Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

The global assembly line begins in North America, Europe, and Japan where the research and design for micro-chips is carried out and where assembly workers, often immigrant women, fabricate "wafers" or large sheets of micro-chips. These wafers are sent to factories in Third World countries, particularly Southeast Asia, where women factory workers, working for poverty wages in dangerous working conditions, cut, bond, and test the chips for re-export to industrialized countries where they are assembled, again often by immigrant women, into a multitude of products, including computerized office equipment.

The introduction of this technology into offices in industrialized countries is creating new and serious health hazards for women workers, as well as increasingly routinized work, new forms of management control, and the prospect of massive unemployment.

A new twist has stretched the global assembly line back to the Third World as corporations have begun to "export" data processing to regions where they can reap the benefits of women's high literacy skills and low wage levels.

The meeting in the Phlippines was an opportunity for women workers, educators, and organizers to share information and organizing strategies, and to put in place an international network and strategy to continue the struggle against the global

Amy Gottlieb

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impact of the microelectronic industry.

The information and experiences we shared with each other at the meeting resulted in a deeper understanding of the global assembly line and its impact in each region.

We were able to put the micro-electronics industry in the context of the worldwide operations of multinational corporations and their movement from country to country, depending on the availability of cheap labour and other financial incentives. We heard accounts from women working in "Export Processing" or "Free Trade" Zones, which are being established in more and more countries as the governments of many Third World countries compete for foreign investment.

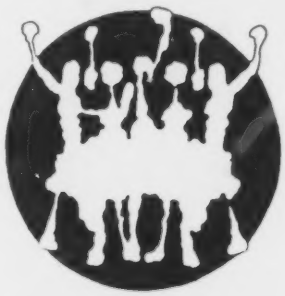
We also learned of the current decline in the microelectronics industry, and the massive retrenchment (lay-offs) taking place in many countries, due in part to the overall decline in the industry, but also to the impact of automation. Computerization in micro-chip factories is eliminating thousands of jobs.

We were reminded of the increasing trend towards the "export" of data processing, particularly to the Caribbean, and of the necessity to begin research and education on this issue so as to initiate an effective and coordinated response.

The picture of the micro-chip industry that emerged from our exchange was not an encouraging one, but it was countered with information about the ways that womens' and workers' movements are developing and taking action in different regions. We were inspired by the innovative ways that women are reaching one another, whether it be through day care centers, grocery stores, or by talking to other workers in the factories. In every region women are finding ways of educating and organizing themselves and each other, often in the face of political repression and intimidation.

At the group strategy session which closed the meeting the participants agreed to a number of actions: to establish an on-going exchange of research, information, and publications; to strengthen our workers' education programs and efforts to organize women workers; to include an international perspective in all our work; to plan further exchanges of workers and organizers from different regions; to organize solidarity and financial support for campaigns in different regions; and to translate relevant materials and learn new languages--an essential part of international solidarity.

The connections that were made in the Philippines need to grow and consolidate. The meeting raised many questions about the most effective ways to support each other's work in different regions. These questions will only be answered as the network becomes concrete over the coming months and years.



In the following articles and interviews we have tried to highlight some of the ways that women at different points along the global assembly line are approaching educational and organizing work, depending on the situation in their country. The following articles are based on presentations, interviews, and written materials exchanged at the meeting in the Philippines.

A Summary of Proceedings from the meeting in the Philippines, including a listing of resources, is available for $4.00 from:

Participatory Research Group
#309-229 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1R4

We will also be producing a popular education booklet which will include: an illustrated, description and analysis of the international division of labour, which we call the micro-chip global assembly line; examples of women organizing in different regions, based on information from the consultation; and a section which encourages the development of an international solidarity network. It will be available in September 1987.

KMK:

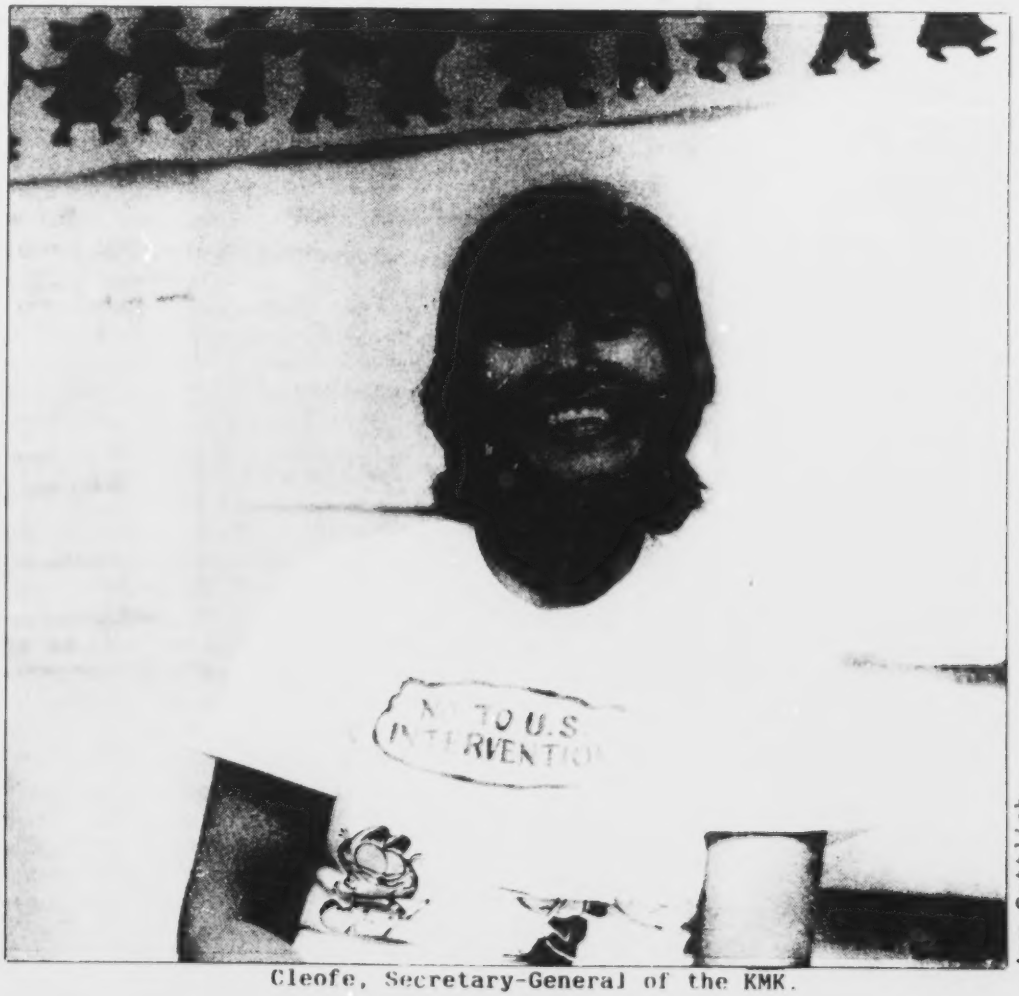
Women Worker's Movement in the Philippines

During the five-day exposure tour that began the microtech meeting, many of us were exposed to the work of the Kilusan Ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK), the women workers' movement in the Philippines. We were impressed and inspired by the work of the KMK, by the high level of organizing and commitment we saw within the organization, and by the integration of the women workers' movement with the women's movement as a whole and with other political struggles in the country.

Cleofe Zapanta, the Secretary-General of the KMK, gave a presentation on the objectives, structure, and activities of the KMK. Her presentation led to a discussion about the reasons for the high level of political participation among women in the Philippines, and the relationship between the women's movement and other political organizing.

Following are edited excerpts from Cleofe's presentation, and some comments from Jing Porte of the Women's Centre, an educational center for women workers that works closely with the KMK.

Kilusan Ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK) is a mass organization of women workers in the Philippines. It was founded in 1985, although discussion about the need for an organization to take up the needs of women workers began in 1979. In 1983 we formed an organization for women workers in the



Amy Gottlieb

Cleofe, Secretary-General of the KMK.

industrial sector--the Women Worker's Industrial Alliance--but we soon realized that there are large numbers of women workers in other sectors, and that many are still unorganized. We formed the KMK to unite the largest number of women workers, organized and unorganized, in the Philippines. We now have members in the industrial, service, and agricultural sectors and we have formulated a list of eleven major demands for women workers.

When we had our first congress in 1985 the membership was 5,000 women workers. Now, after ten months of organizing work, we have 135 chapters nationwide and a membership of 13,000. Ninety-three chapters of the KMK are made up of agricultural workers in the haciendas in Negros (the heart of the sugar industry in the Philippines).

We have a national structure which includes a General Assembly; a National Council; an Executive Committee and committees responsible for Education, Finances, Organizing, and Campaigns; Regional Councils; and Municipal Coordinating Committees.

The KMK is not a bargaining unit, we are not entitled to bargain with the management. Most of our members are members of unions under the KMU (the militant trade union movement in the Philippines). We have close coordination with the KMU in terms of women's issues. We try to have our demands included in the general union's demands. When we are organizing a KMK chapter in a factory we see to it that the union officers understand our purpose. Because if you can't convince the union officer it is very hard to have the demands of women workers included. So we try to be sure that all the unions are aware of the issues of the women workers. The KMU now has a Women's Commission for coordinating with us.

One of the KMK's objectives is to organize those women who have no unions. One of the secrets of our success as an organization is that a lot of our organizers are workers themselves. I used to work in a department store, but after we formed a union there I decided to resign and organize other workers.

Besides our direct organizing work, we also plan rallies and protests related to women workers' issues, and we coordinate

with the activities of other sectors of women, especially for traditional celebrations like May 1 and June 12 (Philippines National Day). The day after our National Congress in 1985 we picketed the Ministry of Labour and Employment to present women workers demands and issues. Recently we invited Sister Mary John from GABRIELA (the coalition of women's groups in the Philippines) to attend one of our forums where we discussed the Constitutional Commission and the role of workers in formulating the new constitution of the Philippines.

The position of women in trade unions is changing. Before, among union officers, the women were in the traditional positions of secretary and treasurer. But now there are lots of unions whose presidents are women. That's why we are training more women workers to be leaders.

The education we give is not the same as the KMU. The KMU gives more general education about the situation of the workers in the Philippines. KMK education focusses on the specific conditions of women workers. In our orientation we include the condition of women in the Philippines in general, the situation of women workers, and how to form KMK chapters in different unions or factories. The Education Committee is responsible for giving the KMK orientation to our members, and also for coordinating other kinds of training--leadership training, speakers' training, organizers' training, and instructors' training. We also give maternal health care education.

KMK Demands

1. Guarantee women's full participation in gainful employment. More jobs to our Filipino women.
2. Women should not be discriminated against because of sex, age, or civilian status. Pregnancy should not be made a basis for her termination.
3. Equal pay for equal work done and implement just wages for all Filipino workers--both men and women.
4. Abolish the "piece-rate system" and regularize women workers who have rendered six months work.
5. Women should have equal access to skilled work or to protected jobs.
6. All women workers should have four months maternity leave benefits. Employers should also grant one week paternity leave. Women workers should be given menstruation leave benefits based on the total wage.
7. Workers with families have the right to parental leave in order to respond to family or their children's needs without prejudice to their job security.
8. In her period of pregnancy, the woman worker has the right to object to any hazardous or heavy jobs which could affect her health or her baby's health (without any penalty).

It is not only women workers in factories who are organizing under the KMK. In Baguio, for example, the miners' wives are now organizing and we are planning to have a housewives' organization affiliated with the KMK. There are also some demands on our organization to organize women domestic helpers. We are still planning how we can do this, because these workers are scattered in individual households.

Several participants raised questions about the high level of women's political activity in the Philippines, in contrast with other countries that have experienced equally repressive regimes. Jing Porte, of the Women's Centre, commented.

It doesn't follow that if you have a very repressive regime that women will automatically join organizations, that you have a militant workers' organization or a militant women's movement. We have seen this in so many countries where wages are low, working conditions are very poor, and management has sophisticated means of controlling the workers. The consciousness is not automatic.

It takes a focussed organizing effort. The women's movement didn't happen overnight. There was an organization called MAKIBAKA way back in the seventies. But when martial law was declared MAKIBAKA and many other organizations went underground. After that there was no conscious effort to organize women or create women's organizations until recently when we felt we should really have a women's movement here in the Philippines and we started organizing again.

In Europe, women ask "How come in the Philippines the ecologists don't disagree with the feminists?" I think it's because the women's movement is not alien to the total struggle of the Filipino people. Why should a peasant woman join the women's movement? It has to advance her interests, which is land reform. So GABRIELA's interest is also for land reform. The demands of the women's movement are always linked with the problems of the Filipino women and the Filipino people in the different sectors and classes. So when we say we are from the women's movement, we are not only ecologists, we are not only micro-chip technology activists, we speak for Filipino women in general. Our aspirations are the aspirations of the women peasants, the women workers, the women in the offices, the professionals.

We have a perspective of winning, of victory. I think this shouldn't leave us, because if it does, we won't be going anywhere. That's why we talk about commitment. Among the Filipino organizations we always talk about commitment. We don't really brag about it, but it's there.

Linking Philip's Workers

The microelectronics industry is dominated by multinational corporations which shift their operations from country to country. A frequently-discussed strategy among women working in the industry is that of linking workers from different countries who are employed by the same corporation.

Adopting this strategy means that concrete and detailed research can be carried out on the corporation in question and that internationally coordinated campaigns are more likely to be effective by targetting the same corporation, from different regions.

The Foundation for Research on the Electrotechnical Industry (SOBE) in the Netherlands is one group that has adopted this strategy. Members of SOBE attended the micro-chip technology consultation in the Philippines, and told us about their work.

SOBE is a small, independent, voluntary organization that works with workers and trade unions inside Philips plants in the Netherlands, and tries to link Philips workers in different countries.

With investments in sixty countries, Philips is one of the three largest multinationals in the world. Next to the government, it is the largest employer in the Netherlands. There is a Philips plant in every town, and the corporation often influences local town councils. Philips is also known as "the most social of employers". As one enters Eindhoven, the town which is the Philips headquarters in the Netherlands, one sees gigantic factories and then the Philips parks, the Philips library, the Philips Cultural Centre, the Philips football stadium , the Philips medical service, the Philips travel agency, the Philips pension fund, Philips schools, and the Philips village (Philips owns a whole city district). There is also the Philips postage stamp club, the Philips brass band, and the Philips pigeon club!

But as well as being the largest employer in the Netherlands, Philips is also the greatest contributor to unemployment. In 1970, 106,000 people worked for Philips in the Netherlands. By

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information exchange 8 . Spain and Portugal in ECM. TNC's in South Africa

CONNEXIONS

QUARTERLY INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION BULLETIN FOR PHILIPS WORKERS

Strike at light-plant India

1982 this number had dropped to 78,000 and it is expected that by 1990 another 20,000 jobs will have disappeared.

This massive reduction of employment in the Netherlands is due to the large scale international reorganization Philips has been carrying out, and to the impact of automation in its factories. In a search for cheap labour and other financial incentives, Philips has opened factories in many Third World countries, including Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and the Philippines. It is also increasing its activities in the United States and Canada by taking over other corporations. Automation is resulting in job loss in all of these places. Sometimes this is carried out by simply not rehiring when workers leave, in other cases workers are actually given dismissal letters, and in some cases workers are encouraged to resign "voluntarily".

The initiative to form SOBE began ten years ago as more and more production was moving out of the Netherlands, and workers,

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particularly women workers, were experiencing a lot of insecurity. SOBE formed in an attempt to keep workers informed of developments in Philips operations around the world, to support the actions of Philips workers, and to build solidarity between Philips workers in different parts of the world, so that they will not be played off against one another.

SOBE carries out detailed research on Philips operations, which is made available in a variety of publications and through *Connecta*, a quarterly information bulletin distributed internationally. *Connecta* was initiated by Philips workers who attended the International Philips Conference in the Netherlands, in 1982. *Connecta* publishes information and analyses of interest to Philips workers, and supports international solidarity efforts. The newsletter includes articles about new technology and other developments in production, trade union struggles in different parts of the world, and focusses particularly on the situation and struggles of women workers.

A recent issue of *Connecta* includes articles on Philips operations in India, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal, as well as articles on the situation of women workers in Japan, the issue of night-work for women, recent developments in automation, and information about Philips investments in different regions.

As well as its publications and newsletter, SOBE continues to plan ways of bringing Philips workers together to exchange information and strategies. Plans are currently underway for an international meeting of Philips bulb production workers.

SOBE's efforts are a working example of ways to provide workers with the information they need to take some control of their working lives, in the face of the massive expansion of the worldwide operations of multinational corporations.

For information about SOBE's work, publications or newsletter, contact:

SOBE
Demer 38
5611 AS Eindhoven
Nederland
Tel. (040) 447021

The following groups collaborated in the conception and organizing of the Micro-chip Technology meeting:

Women's Center & Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK)
Room 406
R+G Tirol Building
831 Edsa Corner
Scout Albano Street
Quezon City
Metro Manila
Philippines

Center for Women's Resources
2nd floor
Mar Santos Building
43 Roces Ave.,
Quezon City
Philippines

Women's Program
International Council for Adult Education
29 Prince Arthur Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5R 1B2

Participatory Research Group
229 College St., Suite 309
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 1R4

j.l. delaplaine

Organizing Malaysian Women Workers

Our first interview was with a woman who is active in a Malaysian women's organization. At her request we have not identified individuals, organizations or locations by name.

Our organization came together eight years ago to address the special problems that women have. We hold education classes for women workers in the urban and the rural sectors and we have a People's Popular Program aimed at teaching women their basic rights. We've also started a kindergarden program for the children of workers in a squatter area.

This squatter area is on the edges of the railway track, and people come and build their houses there. Many of the people who work in the Free Trade Zone go there to live. The houses are considered illegal and the government can demolish them any time they want.

The houses are very poor, one room, sometimes two rooms. People go to the bathroom in the bushes at the back, they wait until night comes and then they go. There is no electricity, just oil lamps, and water is another problem.

So we started a kindergarden program for the children. Otherwise they would just be hanging around because their parents can't afford to send them to a pre-school. We charge a small fee because we want people to value education. At the end of every month the parents come to pay the fees, and I talk to them and ask them about their work. Sometimes after work I go to their houses and talk to them about their children and about their jobs. In this way we are reaching the parents through the children.

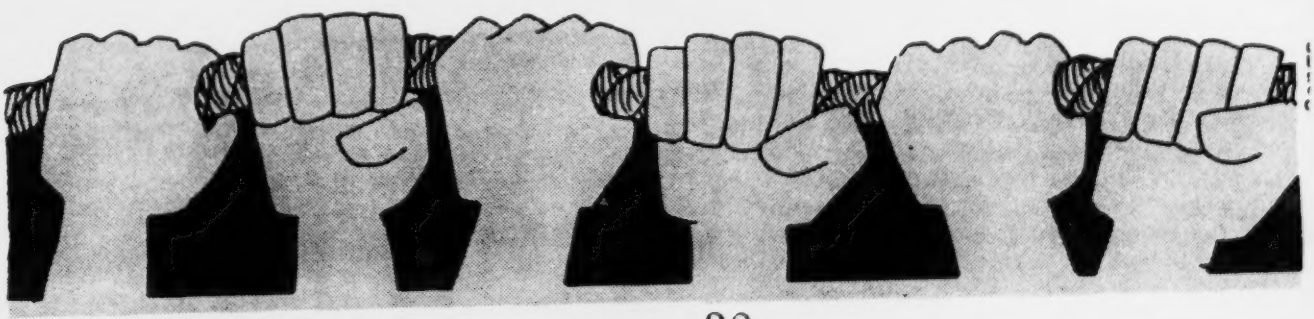
When I first started at the kindergarden I had about seventy students. Now with retrenchment increasing all the time, the numbers of children are decreasing because they stay with their parents who are unemployed.

Quite a few members of our organization are nurses. Some of them want to get together and start a medical program in the communities we are working in. In fact we've already started using the kindergarden on the weekends as a clinic for children and mothers. General hygiene is one of the main health care problems, the whole environment is so horrible.

As part of our education program for women workers, we are trying to do organizing in the electronics factories. Sometimes after my own shift I go to other factories and wait outside for the girls to come out. But many of them don't want to talk to me, they are suspicious about what I am trying to do. So we have to depend on friends. I say, "Since you are not interested in the union, introduce me to somebody who you think is interested." So she might take me to meet her friend who is more outspoken and who would like to join.

It is very difficult to organize the electronics sector in Malaysia. Each industry is required to have a national union, so, for example, we tried to join the Electrical Union but the Registrar of Unions said our jobs are not similar enough and would not let us join, and the Electrical Union is not allowed to organize electronics workers.

In 1972 the government introduced an Industrialization Plan and started the Free Trade Zones. For five years after that it was illegal to form unions in the Zones, so



it was not until 1978 that we could legally form a union. In 1978 the Malaysian Trade Union Congress applied for registration of a union for electronics workers. By 1984 they had still heard nothing from the Registrar of Trade Unions so they took the Registrar to court. The judge told the Trade Union Congress that it was not their affair, that if the workers want a union they should come forward themselves and apply. How on earth will that be possible?

Right now I'm putting together a primer for electronics workers. I need corporate information about the companies operating in the industry, especially Motorola, because that will probably be my case study. I went to the Industrial Office here and got some information. Motorola says they have been running at a loss for a couple of years. It's unbelievable. I need to have that kind of information to calculate the rate of exploitation. It's very important for the workers to know this.

Another way we try and reach workers is through drama. We put on skits which present different aspects of the problems workers face. We performed for the Malaysian Trade Union Congress, at the International Women's Day rally, and for the electronics workers who got together to support the Mostek workers.

We also use drama on the rubber plantations, particularly around the issue of paraquat. Paraquat is the cheapest pesticide in the world today and it's very dangerous. Workers go blind if it splashes in their eyes and they die if it gets into their bloodstream. Many women on the plantations have died from being sprayed by paraquat.

The workers in the plantations don't have time to read papers, nor the money to buy them. Because of the falling prices of rubber their take-home pay $35/month. So we send them cuttings of news from the papers to share among themselves.

We also organize seminars at the local level, and sometimes at the national level to consolidate our work. We have education programs for organizers that include information about the situation of women in Malaysia, the composition of the workforce, number of women workers, the women's groups that exist in Malaysia.

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Our group doesn't have any full-time organizers. Everybody is a voluntary worker. The organizing that we do cannot expand very fast because we have family lives and jobs. To do all that and still have time for organizing is very, very difficult. We need funds for full-time organizers and for the rent and the operations of an office. Right now we borrow typewriters, we borrow offset machines, everything is borrowed. We're also trying to build up our library and we need documentation of all kinds.

Political repression

In Malaysia we have the Internal Security Act which prohibits any organizing among peasants, workers, students. A political critic of the government who agitates or organizes can be detained without warrant and without trial. This Act actually originated in Britain during the Second World War and was used against German spies. Now they've amended it and adopted it for use in Malaysia. It's a terrible threat hanging over our heads.

We don't know what the number of political prisoners is now, we don't have any power to get information. There have been people who have gone into prison and some of them have come out having changed their views completely. They appear on TV apologizing for being a threat to the

government. At times there is a lot of pressure from the government. Every time we have a meeting at our office there is a car parked outside with someone inside it. He doesn't do anything, just sits there. Every time we have a meeting, the whole next night we can't sleep.

One time when the organizing in the electronics sector was getting strong, one of the officers from the Special Branch called me up and tried to threaten me. It's lonely and it's frightening and at times we're not sure whether it's worth it. We don't want to be nipped in the bud. Our organization is so new, but we are starting to see the solidarity and the strength.

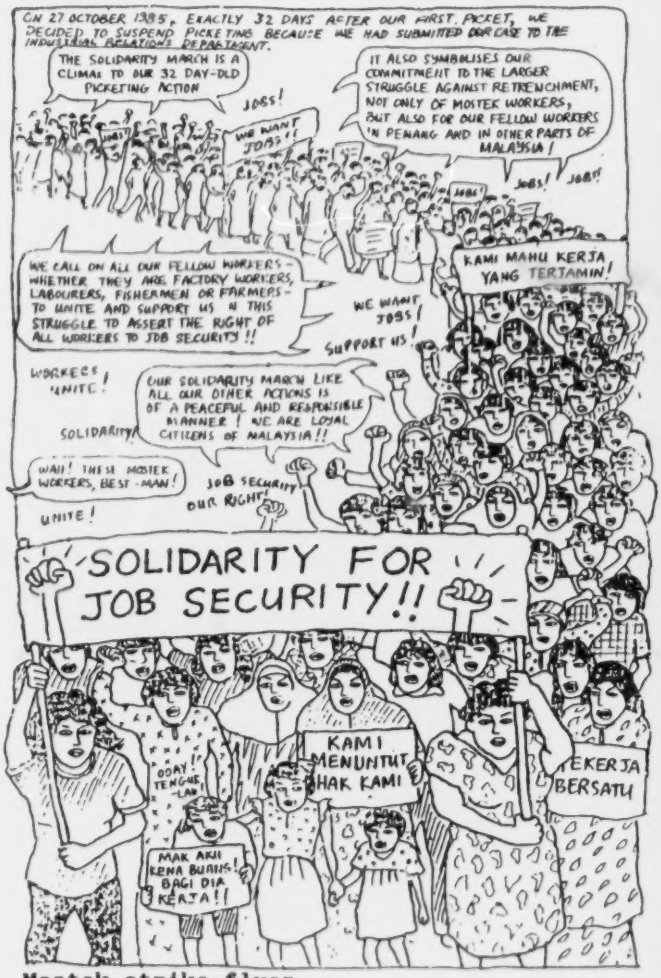
Our second interview was with a worker in a large electronics factory in Malaysia.

I've been at this factory for three years. When I first started they asked me if I knew anything about unions. I didn't really know what a union was, so I said "no". Now I understand why they asked me that.

I do wire bonding work, which is manual scope work. A wire comes down, you look through the scope and thread it using tweezers and then you make a small knot, not too light or too thick. It took about two months to learn, but once I learned I was fast, provided I was given a good machine. I used to work very hard. At this company when you do a good job your name is put up in lights as the "best bonder". They were very hard on me, pressing me to do so much work, but then my name would be up there and I would feel so proud. And you are given a Parker pen with your name engraved on it.

I usually have very bad backaches and headaches every day. Sometimes it becomes so severe that when somebody says "hi", it hurts my head. I keep my hair short and pour water on my head every day, because I don't want to take too many tablets. And I can't read long without my eyes watering.

One day I was not feeling well, and I was given a bad machine, so I couldn't do my work well. The supervisor shouted at me. It really irritated me so I told him not to shout at me. Suddenly he changed


ON 27 OCTOBER 1985, EXACTLY 32 DAYS AFTER OUR FIRST PICKET, WE DECIDED TO SUSPEND PICKETING BECAUSE WE HAD SUBMITTED OUR CASE TO THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT.
THE SOLIDARITY MARCH IS A CLIMAX TO OUR 32 DAY-OLD PICKETING ACTION
IT ALSO SYMBOLISES OUR COMMITMENT TO THE LARGER STRUGGLE AGAINST RETRENCHMENT, NOT ONLY OF MOSTEK WORKERS, BUT ALSO FOR OUR FELLOW WORKERS IN PENANG AND IN OTHER PARTS OF MALAYSIA!
JOBS!
WE WANT JOBS!!
JOBS! JOB!!
KAMI MAHU KERJA YANG TERTAMIN!
WE CALL ON ALL OUR FELLOW WORKERS - WHETHER THEY ARE FACTORY WORKERS, LABOURERS, FISHERMEN OR FARMERS - TO UNITE AND SUPPORT US IN THIS STRUGGLE TO ASSERT THE RIGHT OF ALL WORKERS TO JOB SECURITY!!
WE WANT JOBS!
SUPPORT US!
WORKERS UNITE!
OUR SOLIDARITY MARCH LIKE ALL OUR OTHER ACTIONS IS OF A PEACEFUL AND RESPONSIBLE MANNER! WE ARE LOYAL CITIZENS OF MALAYSIA!!
SOLIDARITY!
WAH! THESE MOSTEK WORKERS, BEST-MAN!
JOB SECURITY OUR RIGHT!
UNITE!
SOLIDARITY FOR JOB SECURITY!!
KAMI MENUNTUT HAK KAMI
EKERJA BERSATU
MAK AKU SEBAB BURUH! BAGI DIA KERJA!!
Mostek strike flyer

and said "It's all right, let's talk it over." Later he called me to a room, offered me a coffee and asked me about my problems. I said I didn't have any problems, I just didn't like the way he shouted at me. He apologized and after that he was nice to me. Then I realized that if you do whatever he says, he pushes you too hard, but if you fight for your rights, then he is less hard.

I live with some friends in a hostel. The company pays half, and we pay half. There are four of us in a room. If any of our friends come they can't stay with us in the hostel, we have to talk to them outside. The guard comes to our rooms and tells us that we can't watch TV after 10 because we have to go to work tomorrow. The guard is the only man who can come into the hostel, even if our fathers come to see us we have to go out.

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We work eight hours a day and our wage is $1.65 an hour Malaysian, which is less than $1 U.S. We work six days a week, and we change shifts every two weeks.

Sometimes we are forced to do overtime every day. One time all of us did overtime for a month. At the end of the month the supervisor told us that he had lost our overtime slips so he couldn't pay us. We told him we could remember how many hours of overtime we had done, but he said he couldn't trust us.

There were three of us who were quite strong at that time, we would fight for our rights on an individual basis. So we said "Why don't we all work together on this matter?" We were mostly Malays and Indians on that line and the Malay girls had been budgetting for the coming festival, so they were angry. We talked and we all agreed to stop working the next day at 1pm. Some girls were a bit frightened, but finally they said "Ok, if somebody starts it off then we will follow." Some of the girls were worried that we would all get fired but we said "There are forty of us, people will notice, we'll go to the press."

At 1pm the next day we all stopped working and just sat. The supervisor came around and said "What's wrong, why have all of you stopped working." We told him we wanted our overtime pay. He said "I'll go talk to the management, please continue your work", and we said "No, you find out from the management first, we'll wait for you." He was so panicky, you could see it on his face. He ran to the office to speak to the management, then he came back and said "OK send one representative to talk for all of you". We said "No, we all want to speak." Then he said "OK, tomorrow by lunch I'll pay you." We told him if we weren't paid we would do the same thing the next day. So the next day lunch time we were all paid our overtime.

After that the three of us were being watched. He could see that we were provoking the other girls and he got very angry with us. One of us was put into another line to work with chemicals. She was pregnant at the time and she knew the chemicals were very bad for her, so she left. The other girl was given a promotion. She was put on office hours which means she goes for lunch at a different time and can't meet the girls. She didn't want the promotion but she had to take it or lose her job.

They kept me there doing bonding work but they told me not to talk to groups of girls and not to go into other lines. If I did, they would ask the girls what I had said. When they separated the three of us like that it frightened the other girls, they didn't want it to happen to them. But I said, somebody has to start it.

At that time I didn't know who to approach for help, I didn't know anything about organizing, I didn't know how to talk to the girls, I was alone. I thought to myself, "I'm going to give up on this, I'm going to leave." Then one day I met a women at the bus stop. She spoke to me and asked me questions about where I worked. I was so fed up I just told her my whole story, and then she told me she belonged to a womens' organization and would I like to come.

If you are interested in knowing more about these organizations, please write to them C/O:

Women's Program
International Council for Adult Education
229 College Street, Suite 309
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 1R4

Carillon/LNS

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North America

Organizing for Control of our Jobs and our Health

North American participants at the meeting represented groups doing educational and organizing work with clerical workers about the impact of micro-chip technology on their jobs and lives, as well as groups working with production workers in the electronics industry who are being confronted with serious chemical hazards at their workplaces and in their communities. The Office Technology Education Project in Massachusetts, U.S.A. and the groups that have formed in "Silicon Valley", California, U.S.A. are examples of the ways women are informing themselves and each other, in order to take action.

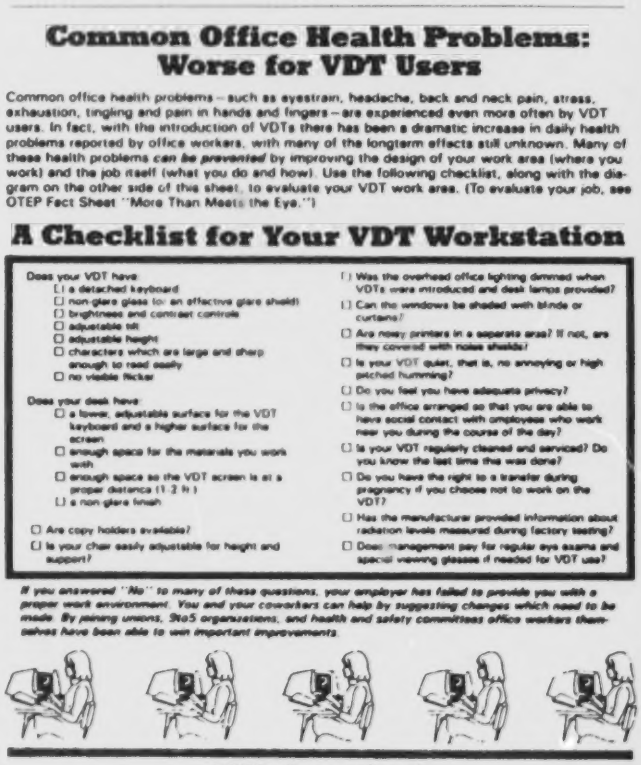
Office Technology Education Project

The Office Technology Education Project (OTEP) was formed in recognition of the serious and far-reaching effects that the introduction of new technology is having on office work, and out of the need for office workers to have the information necessary to take some control of this process.

OTEP's work has several components. They offer a four-part educational series to workers working on video display terminals (VDTs) in both unionized and unorganized workplaces. The educationals cover identifying and preventing office hazards, as well as discussion of the broader impact of automation on office work. One result of the series is the formation of "technology committees" which work towards actually implementing changes in the workplace, sometimes by urging the union to take a stronger stand on automation issues, or, where no union exists, by collectively making recommendations for change to management.

OTEP also offers a single-session workshop for secretarial students in community colleges and job training programs. This workshop introduces women to the health and safety issues related to the jobs they will be seeking, and arms them with reference material for when they begin work.

Unorganized women workers are often the hardest hit by the introduction of new technology, and are also often the most



Common Office Health Problems: Worse for VDT Users

Common office health problems – such as eyestrain, headache, back and neck pain, stress, exhaustion, tingling and pain in hands and fingers – are experienced even more often by VDT users. In fact, with the introduction of VDTs there has been a dramatic increase in daily health problems reported by office workers, with many of the long-term effects still unknown. Many of these health problems *can be prevented* by improving the design of your work area (where you work) and the job itself (what you do and how). Use the following checklist, along with the diagram on the other side of this sheet, to evaluate your VDT work area. (To evaluate your job, see OTEP Fact Sheet "More Than Meets the Eye.")

A Checklist for Your VDT Workstation

Does your VDT have:
- ☐ a detached keyboard
- ☐ non-glare glass (or an effective glare shield)
- ☐ brightness and contrast controls
- ☐ adjustable tilt
- ☐ adjustable height
- ☐ characters which are large and sharp enough to read easily
- ☐ no visible flicker

Does your desk have:
- ☐ a lower, adjustable surface for the VDT keyboard and a higher surface for the screen
- ☐ enough space for the materials you work with
- ☐ enough space so the VDT screen is at a proper distance (1-2 ft.)
- ☐ a non-glare finish

- ☐ Are copy holders available?
- ☐ Is your chair easily adjustable for height and support?
- ☐ Was the overhead office lighting dimmed when VDTs were introduced and desk lamps provided?
- ☐ Can the windows be shaded with blinds or curtains?
- ☐ Are noisy printers in a separate area? If not, are they covered with noise shields?
- ☐ Is your VDT quiet, that is, no annoying or high pitched humming?
- ☐ Do you feel you have adequate privacy?
- ☐ Is the office arranged so that you are able to have social contact with employees who work near you during the course of the day?
- ☐ Is your VDT regularly cleaned and serviced? Do you know the last time this was done?
- ☐ Do you have the right to a transfer during pregnancy if you choose not to work on the VDT?
- ☐ Has the manufacturer provided information about radiation levels measured during factory testing?
- ☐ Does management pay for regular eye exams and special viewing glasses if needed for VDT use?

If you answered "No" to many of these questions, your employer has failed to provide you with a proper work environment. You and your coworkers can help by suggesting changes which need to be made. By joining unions, 9to5 organizations, and health and safety committees office workers themselves have been able to win important improvements.

OTEP fact sheet

vulnerable and least able to stand their ground in the face of changes in the work place. Because of this OTEP is organizing a public education program particularly aimed at unorganized office workers. Activities have included distributing leaflets outside companies which employ large numbers of office workers and at mass transit stops; writing newspaper articles and appearances on TV and radio talk shows; and a widely-distributed "survey" and publicity campaign about the impact of computer monitoring on women's office work.

In 1986 OTEP organized a state-wide conference on office automation which was attended by 250 people. The participants at the conference were individuals and organizations committed to guaranteeing workers some control and benefit from the introduction of new technology. They launched the Massachusetts Coalition on New Office Technology in an attempt to unite office workers, unions, women's and health organizations, and researchers. The

Coalition plans to mount public education and action campaigns aimed at influencing union, company, and public policy regarding the use of VDTs.

OTEP also operates as a resource and referral centre for VDT workers, and has a "hotline" that workers can call with questions. They publish a regular newsletter called ***Automated Times*** and have produced a set of easy-to-read and informative fact sheets on the health and safety hazards of new technology. The fact sheets include: Common Office Hazards...and How to Avoid Them; Job Content: More than Meets the Eye; A Model VDT Workstation; and Clerical Work is Stressful. A set of four fact sheets is available for U.S.$2.00.

For further information contact:

Lisa Gallatin
Office Technology Education Project
6 Newsome Park
Jamaica Plain,
MA 02130
U.S.A.

The Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH)

In Silicon Valley, California, the electronics industry is the largest employer. The Valley, which lies just south of San Fransisco, is home to more than 500 electronics companies which employ over 200,000 people. More than 75 percent of the production workers are women, and at least 40 percent of these are women of colour. These female semiconductor production workers are among the most poorly paid industrial workers in the United States. Starting wages are barely over minimum wage. There are no unions in electronic plants, job-security is non-existent, and workers are constantly faced with the threat of plant closures due to the availability of cheaper labour in other states or countries.

Workers in microprocessor production are exposed to a huge array of toxic chemicals, including substances linked to birth defects, cancer, and other chronic health effects. Recently a woman who had worked for six years in a GTE-Lenkurt plant in New Mexico was diagnosed as having malignant melanoma, a form of cancer, which she attributes to her repeated exposure to solvents and other toxins at work. She is one of ninety-six workers at the same plant who are sueing the company with claims of disease or illness caused by exposure to dangerous chemicals.

Chemicals used in the industry are also showing up in drinking water in surrounding areas, and are being linked with high rates of miscarriages and birth defects in these communities.

In response to the deadly hazards posed by the chemicals used in the industry, a number of groups have formed in the Silicon Valley to provide information, education, and advocacy to workers in the area. The Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH) is a resource center on health issues related

I'M CERTAINLY GLAD I'M PAST CHILDBEARING AGE, SO I CAN CONTINUE TO WORK IN THIS VILE, POLLUTED ATMOSPHERE.
YES! WE ARE INDEED PRIVILEGED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP MANY DEBILITATING ILLNESSES THAT ALES GREEDY MANAGEMENT WOULD HAVE DEPRIVED US OF.
Nicole Hollander

to "high tech" industries. They operate a confidential "hot line" for electronics workers, and are handling requests for help from all across the country. They also offer workshops and produce educational booklets and fact sheets (see list below).

Injured Workers United, a project of SCCOSH, is a self-help and support group for workers injured on the job, usually due to chemical exposure in Silicon Valley plants. The group evolved after workers started to claim compensation for chemical exposure and were met with resistance and discouragement. Local state and federal regulatory bodies have done very little to inform or to protect production workers

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from most workplace hazards. Injured Workers United has campaigned effectively for quality medical care, retraining services, and a more responsive system of workers' compensation.

The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition came about with the discovery of widespread groundwater contamination by the electronics companies in the area. The Coalition has been working for over four years on ways to prevent and remove this contamination and have compiled extensive data on chemical storage and toxic waste handling practices and problems and associated health effects.

All of the above groups are members of Integrated Circuit, a nationwide organization of activists and environmentalists concerned with labour conditions, health and safety problems, and the environmental impact of "high tech" industries. They have recently launched a major new campaign to rid the workplace of chemical hazards to the reproductive capacity of both women and men.

For information contact:

SSCOSH/Injured Workers United
277 West Hedding St.
San Jose, California, 95110
U.S.A.

Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition
277 West Hedding St., Suite 208
San Jose, California, 95110
U.S.A.

Women's Skills

Women's Skills Development Society, a Vancouver-based group, has two new publications: Playing With Our Health: Hazards in the Automated Office, a solution-oriented booklet which provides accurate and up-to-date information on the health hazards of VDTs; and Taking Control of Our Future: Clerical Workers and New Technology, which identifies key issues for clerical workers and offers some concrete strategies for change. Write to:

Women's Skills Development Society, 4340 Carson Street, Burnaby, B.C., V5J 2X9, Canada.

Resources

A number of groups represented at the meeting publish regular newsletters related to the impact of micro-chip technology on workers and/or to building international links between women workers. Following is a list of some of these newsletters and where to write in order to receive them:

Asian Women Workers Newsletter, published four times a year by the Committee for Asian Women (CAW) 57 Peking Road, 5/F, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

CAW is an Asian regional organization that facilitates education and organizing among women industrial, agricultural and service workers. The newsletter reports on the living and working conditions of Asian women workers and their struggles for equality and liberation.

Automated Times, A Massachusetts Newsletter on Office Automation, published by Office Technology Education Project, 6 Newsome Park, Jamaica Plain, MA, 02130, U.S.A.

Connecta: Quarterly International Information Bulletin for Philips Workers Published by SOBE, Demer 38, 5611 A[illegible] Eindhoven, Nederland

Mexico:

"Our struggle will continue as long as our hearts beat"

The two women from Mexico who attended the meeting in the Philippines were there representing the September 19 Garment Workers' Union. They told us about the founding of their union out of the devastation resulting from the earthquake on September 19, 1985. Many of the garment factories were in gutted tenement buildings which were among the first to collapse with the force of the earthquake. An estimated 5,000 women were killed and thousands injured. Women arrived at work to find their workmates and friends crushed under rubble. The owners came only to rescue the sewing machines. Women who had worked for 15-20 years were left with no compensation and without jobs. On October 18, 10,000 workers participated in a march demanding the registration of an independent union for garment workers; on October 20, the union, which now has 4,500 members, was registered.

The new union aims to develop consciousness among garment workers and to build a democratic union to defend their rights. An important aspect of their work is the education they provide to their members, ranging from education on union issues (how to negotiate, the legal system, collective bargaining, health and safety), to literacy classes, and cultural classes where workers can do aerobics or learn to play the guitar. Childcare is provided free at all their meetings and is considered a priority wherever they are organizing.

In the next issue of *Voices Rising* we will include a longer article on the

September 19 Garment Workers' Union, based on their presentation to the meeting in the Philippines and an interview we did with them there.

For more information, please write:

Evangelina Corona or Conceptcion Guerrero
Sept.19th Garment Workers' Union
Apartado Postal 12-709
Colonia Narvarte
03020 Mexico D.F

Resources continued

Global Electronics, published monthly by the Pacific Studies Center, 2228 View Street, Mountain View, CA, 94041, U.S.A.

The Global Electronics newsletter is part of the Global Electronics Information Project which aims to establish an international network of labour organizers, women's groups, human rights and religious organizations, journalists, and researchers who are concerned about global production in the semiconductor and other related industries. Requests can be made for specific research. File searches are free for groups in the Third World, and on a flexible scale for others.

Resources continued

Cuando trabajar es un infierno, Las mujeres y la nueva division international del trabajo (When work is hell, Women and the new international division of labour), published by the Centro de Investigacion para la Accion Feminina (CIPEF), Benigno Filomeno Rojas No.307, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (D.N.).

This new popular education booklet is about the development of free trade zones as a new form in the oppression and subordination of women. A second volume will focus on the specific situation in the Dominican Republic and the conditions of women workers.

Quehaceres, CIPAF's monthly publication (also in Spanish) is an excellent resource, and often has analyses of the situation of women workers.

Labour Communications, available from 48 Princess Margaret Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Reports on the conditions and struggles of workers in Asia, including women workers in the electronics industry, domestic workers, migrant workers, and the role of multinationals.

Listen Real Loud, News of Women's Liberation Worldwide, published by the Nationwide Women's Program of the American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA, 19102, U.S.A.

As well as providing news about women's struggles worldwide, this newsletter regularly features a section on "Women and Global Corporations". This special section reports on the expanding international network of individuals and groups involved in research, education, support, and direct organizing related to global industries. These include industries where women are concentrated as workers or as targets of consumer culture: electronics, agri-business, textiles, and the garment trades, tourism, media, and pharmaceuticals.

Sistren, published by the Sistren Theatre Collective, 20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica.

Provides information about Sistren's activities, as well as general information about women's issues and organizing in the Caribbean. The Dec.1986-Jan.1987 issue includes articles on women workers in Free Trade Zones, and the Mexican Garment Workers Union.

Women In Action, published by ISIS International, Via Santa Maria Dell'Anima 30, 00186 Rome, Italy.

Women in Action is published twice a year, and contains information on events, groups, new resources, and campaigns that women in different regions of the world are working on.

Upon reflection, after the consultation, it is clear that as we work to develop an international network over the coming months and years, there are important issues we need to address. The consultation was an important moment in the struggle of women workers to educate ourselves and think about how we might take collective and international action to improve our working lives, and to resist the multinational micro-chip industry. We need to take the opportunities provided by the consultation to re-evaluate our work, and to deepen the debate about the best ways to contribute to the growth of a strong and effective movement of international solidarity.

During the consultation we learned a great deal about education and organizing efforts in different countries. We now need to reflect on how these lessons can be applied in our own contexts. What can we learn from the KMK's efforts in the Philippines to mobilize women workers, and their integration of feminist and trade union issues? Should we follow the example of SOBE, in the Netherlands, linking workers from different regions of the world who are employed by the same corporation? What lessons can we draw from the women who are living under repressive political regimes in Southeast Asia and are still managing to reach and organize women workers? What can the Massachusetts Office and Technology Education Projects' model offer us in terms of reaching unorganized clerical workers in North America and the growing number of women clerical workers in other countries?

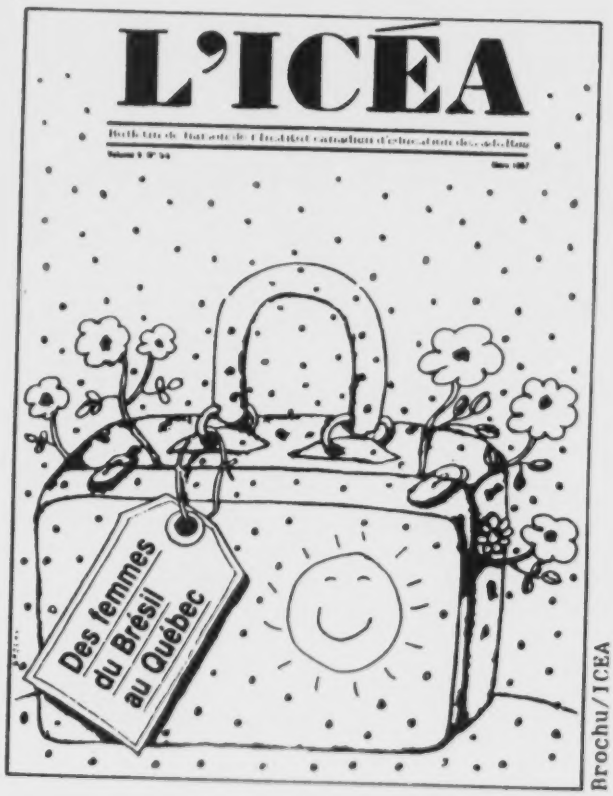
ICEA:

Popular Education in Quebec

Jane Gurr

The Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes(ICEA) hosted a group of five women popular educators from Brazil, for a two week exchange, in January, 1987. This initiative reflects the ICEA's growing committment to developing links between educators in Quebec and adult education movements internationally.

I participated in the final two day evaluation of the exchange project. The following articles are based on notes taken during the evaluation, an interview with Esther Desilets, the Executive Director of the ICEA, and the March 1987 issue of the ICEA Bulletin.



Brochu/ICEA

The ICEA is one of three national Canadian adult education organizations which are members of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). The goals of the ICEA are to promote adult non-formal education that is accessible and reflects the educational needs of adults, and to strengthen the development of adult education generally. Their work is carried out through research and dissemination of information on key adult education issues, and through linking different adult education networks in Quebec, and recently, internationally.

Much of the Institute's work has focussed on issues surrounding the participation of women in adult education. They have conducted a number of studies examining the barriers to women's participation in adult education, and the role of women in popular groups. "We focus on this clientele because they are most affected in terms of accessibility to education," explained Esther Desilets.

"Popular education is a term which has been used for long time both in Quebec and within the Institute. By this we mean education which adults receive in popular groups--in women's groups for example. We are talking about education which is directly associated with changes in people's conditions of life, to the amelioration of those conditions."

Internationally, the work of the Institute has three components: the first involves participating in international organizations such as the ICAE and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO; secondly, receiving delegations of adult educators from around the world, and recently, they have begun organizing exchanges with adult educators in Central America and francophone West African countries.

At one level the aim of the Institute's international involvement is to strengthen the presence of francophone experience and expertise within the adult education movement. "In international agencies, such as the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, I have observed that francophone countries, which are quite strongly represented, do not have much influence on the development of adult education on a world scale. Anglopohone expertise dominates at these international meetings, be it American, English, or from anglophone developing countries. For this reason we decided to begin an international network.

"The Institute currently has a project looking at the educational needs of women in francophone Africa, and in March we sent a group of women went to meet women from the francophone African network formed after Nairobi in 1985. The main objective of this project was to strengthen the participation of the francophone world in the development of adult education."

Secondly, the Institute is interested in exploring similarities and differences in approaches to adult education in other countries. "The Brazil/Quebec exchange is very important for the Institute. Its aim is to give women from Quebec and Brazil exposure to educational practices in another country, and to assess differences and similarities. As such, the project will contribute to solidarity links between these groups and the Institute, as well as increase our respective capacities to influence international agencies. In addition, it may contribute to the development of adult education in the Third World, another of our overall goals."

The Exchange

The ICEA's first exchange project was organized in collaboration with Rede Mulher, a national network of Brazilian women's organizations, and Relais-Femmes, its Quebec counterpart. In the first stage of the project, five popular educators from different sectors of Brazilian society came to Montreal, and spent two weeks visiting and consulting with women's groups. The experience was organized around two major themes: "What is the place and role of women in community, union and political organizations? and, how can women influence their surroundings using popular education as a basic tool?"

The Brazilian women who went to Montreal are all involved in the struggle for social change through popular education, in their respective areas of work. They were: Moemma Viezzer, Coordinator of Rede Mulher, Sao Paolo; Isabel Conceiçao Silva, sugar worker and union organizer, Sao Paolo; Judite Gonçalves de Albuquerque, trainer of rural educators, Para State; Maria Cristina Ribeiro Co, feminist activist and coordinator of women's radio and television programming, Esperito Santo State, and,

Brochu/ICEA

Dalva Weinert Nogueira, Vice-Mayor of the city of Toledo.

Visits in Montreal were organized on the basis of different areas of women's lives and struggles. These included domestic life, paid work, politics and popular movements. Under paid work for example, an exchange took place with women representatives of two major unions and a women's employment centre. Similarily, in the context of domestic work, an exchange was arranged with a women's shelter in Montreal. In each case women from both countries were given an opportunity to talk about the major issues facing women, and the ways in which they are attempting to deal with them.

In summing up the experience, Esther Desilets commented: "What I found most interesting was that there is a similarity between the two countries when we speak of popular education--granted, we aren't a country which has known dictatorship, nor are we a country which knows torture or poverty to the same degree. However it seems clear that at the level of our

approach to education, we do have the need for politicizing our work".

Indeed, the backdrop against which popular groups are working in each country are very different. Brazil just emerged in 1980 from a twenty-year military dictatorship. During that time it was virtually impossible for people to organize. Between 1980-1983 groups began to have some "democratic space" in which to mount struggles against the difficult conditions they face. For instance, while Brazil is rated as the world's eighth strongest economic power, the vast majority of the population are poor, malnourished and lacking adequate housing, healthcare and employment. During the period mentioned, groups formed by and for women, the unemployed, squatters, the homeless, the poor, Blacks, Indians, and the landless, which together formed a "popular movement."

One of the implications of social conditions in Brazil has hence been the development of a strong grassroots movement. Within that, popular education is situated clearly within the overall political project of structural social change. The women's movement is part of that broader movement.

By comparison, Quebec has lived under democracy, and women have had the freedom to organize themselves around issues for a long time. One major difference is that like the rest of Canada, there are many institutionalized social services. What this meant in terms of the exchange was that while there are many common issues of concern to women in Brazil and Quebec (domestic violence, unemployment, housing, and healthcare for example), the focus of their organizing efforts is different.

In Quebec, popular education is still seen as an important process. Esther commented that "in recent years the situation in Quebec has deteriorated. We find more and more young people and women on welfare, on unemployment insurance, and who need to have decent living conditions. There are many who live precarious lives. In Quebec we defend the right to decent conditions of life. In Brazil, this is the key issue in their struggle."

For more information please contact:

Esther Desilets
Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes
506 est, Ste-Catherine, suite 800
Montréal, Québec
Canada H2L 2C7

Marie Letellier
Relais-Femmes
1265, rue Berri, Bureau 810
Montréal, Québec
Canada H2L 4C6

Moema Viezzer
Rede Mulher
Caixa postal 1803
Cep 01051, Sao Paulo
Brazil

Resources:

The following are research reports produced by the Institute. They are available in French and can be obtained by writing directly to the Institute.

La place des femmes dans les groupes populaires (Women's Role in Popular Groups) 1985, $5.00.
This study questions the role that women have played in popular groups in Quebec and suggests that a sexual division of labour exists and is reflected in the way that organizations are structured, and the kind of activism they engage in.

Reconnaissance des acquis du point de vue des femmes (Recognition of Knowledge and Experience from Women's Point of View) 1985, $7.00.
The issue addressed in this study is the difficulty women face in gaining recognition for the experience they have as domestic workers, educators of children and in community work, when they enter the job market. From the employers' perspective women may lack "relevant" or "legitimate" educational training or job experience. The study examines the barriers against women's return to school and to the job market and makes recommendations for an alternative system of evaluation of women's knowledge and experience.

Linking

The question was, how to put those of us working in the field of education for women in touch with one another so we can share our knowledge and experience? We decided to start a new section in which the work of individuals and groups we are in touch with is described briefly and a contact address is provided. This new section is called "Linking"

Muvman Liberayson Fam in Mauritius.

Muvman Librasyon Fam (MLF) is a women-only organization which works with all women in Mauritius, without distinction; women from rural and urban areas, home-based and employed, young and old. Vina Dholah of MLF wrote to tell us about the literacy program with which the organization is involved:

"We are working in close collaboration with another group "Ledikasyon Pu Travayer", whose main aim is to do adult literacy and to print materials in kreol and Bhojpun languages, the two national languages. Kreol is spoken by almost 95% of the population and Bhojpun is spoken in rural areas.

About 50% of the population in Mauritius cannot read and write, and the

percentage is higher among women.

"Last year Ledikayson Pu Travayer (LPT) did an advertisement on radio to do a national literacy course after which about 150 women and 100 men were enrolled. We agreed to do one course in our centre and one of our members who followed a one week teacher training course with LPT, does the literacy course here.

"All of the literacy course work is done on a voluntary basis with the exception that the teacher gets a travelling allowance. The participants pay a symbolic fee of three rupees and this money is used to buy markers and newspaper which we use in the course. All the literacy work is self-financed.

"The literacy course is based on the method of "Paulo Freire"--literacy and consciousness raising in the language spoken by the participants. There is a great demand from workers to learn to read and write but the only difficulty we encounter is that we don't easily get volunteers to teach. In this literacy course participants not only learn to read and write but they also get the opportunity to discuss and to give their views on all aspects in their everyday life. Primary health care, nutrition, working conditions, social problems like transport facilities, water, inequality in living conditions, sex inequality, evolution and so on".

Muvman Liberayson Fam opened a Women's Centre in August, 1985 in a building purchased jointly by MLF and the Domestic Employees Union. Activities held at Lakaz Ros, the Centre, include self-defense classes, health workshops, Marxist economics, and music workshops.

MLF publishes a newsletter and is involved in campaigning around various women's issues. One of these is "The Right to Choose" campaign launched by the Mauritian Women's Liberation Movement in opposition to the Catholic church's campaign against the legalization of sterilization and abortion. MLF is also fighting for the repeal of a law, passed by the government and the opposition, which allows parents to "marry off" their daughters before they have the legal right to say no.

Muvman Liberayson Fam,
Celicourt Antelme Street (Lakaz Ros),
Forest Side, Mauritius

Women's Research and Documentation Project, Tanzania.

The Women's Research and Documentation Project (WRDP) is an important example of a national women's research project which encourages and coordinates the production of information and analysis of the situation of women in Tanzania. The Women's Program recently received an update on the work of the WRDP which is now in its sixth year of existence.

The group has approximately 25 members involved in the different aspects of its work. It has been working to establish links with women and with groups doing similar research in the different regions of Tanzania. WRDP has also extended its links internationally with other research organizations, with its members attending seminars and conferences.

A number of research proposals were submitted for sponsorship over the past year, and during 1987 it is anticipated that the reports of a number of research projects will be completed. Internal seminars are held to hear reports of work in progress and the WDRP continues to publish occasional papers and a newsletter in Kiswahili. A workshop on research methodology was planned for early in the year.

The WRDP is increasingly being called upon by different institutions and government ministries within Tanzania to

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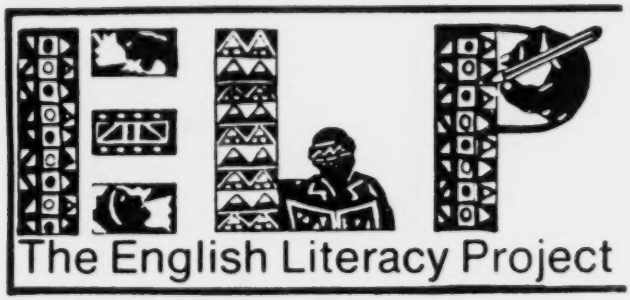
collaborate, advise and conduct research on women's issues. Together with the Bureau of Statistics, the group organized a workshop on population census data in preparation for the 1988 census. The group is also working with the National Women's Organization, and will be working with the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

"Many people are looking to us with hope and expectations" writes Magdalene Ngaiza of WRDP. "Yet these are small achievements. We want to aim high, to move from a project into a permanent feature but with caution. We want to be able to champion issues and influence policy, and much more".

The Women's Research and Documentation Project,
University of Dar es Salaam, P.O. Box 35108,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania



English Literacy Project in South Africa.

The problem of illiteracy in South Africa is huge and existing literacy training reaches a very small percentage of illiterates. Clearly the problem of illiteracy is a reflection of the system of apartheid which denies adequate education to the black majority of the South African population. The struggle to combat illiteracy is thus perceived by progressive and oppositional organizations as a political struggle. Alternative or popular literacy organizations practice a literacy training that promotes critical reflection on the oppressive social relations and conditions experienced by Black South Africans. Such groups tend to work closely with community organizations, women's groups and trade unions struggling for social change. Consequently their work is often hampered and disrupted by the repressive measures which the apartheid regime directs at any oppositional organization.

A recent development amongst progressive literacy organizations in South Africa has been the development of regional and national cooperation between groups. In April of 1986, the first national literacy conference was held in Cape Town and amongst the resolutions adopted were a set that recognized the specific oppression experienced by women in South Africa and committed literacy groups to addressing the issue of women's oppression - for "there will be no true liberation in South Africa without women's liberation".

The English Literacy Project, based in Johannesburg, is one such progressive literacy organization. They wrote to us some months ago about their organization and its approach to literacy work in the context of apartheid South Africa. They also told us of some of the difficulties encountered in organizing literacy training for women domestic workers and cleaners.

The target group of the English Literacy Project's work is Black adults who are either illiterate or semi-literate. "These people suffer daily humiliation exacerbated by the complexity of controls peculiar to the SA apartheid system. Recently SA has witnessed the re-emergence of black assertion through trade unions, community organizations and national political organizations. ELP sees such organization as a crucial area where powerless individuals can come together to work for change. It is for this reason that ELP offers a literacy service to organizations rather than to unconnected individuals with no common political direction."

ELP is a non-racial and independent collective with a current membership of nine full-time members and four part-time. While there is some specialization of tasks according to skills and experience, internal workshops ensure the sharing of skills and special areas of knowledge, and a democratic structure ensures the sharing of responsibility for coordination of the group. Learners represent their interests directly in the organization through a learners committee. The organization was founded by five women and has always been women-centred, but after much discussion it

was decided to take in men with a new intake of staff while continuing to pursue policies favourable to women.

ELP is involved in a number of activities: the production of English as a Second Language and vernacular literacy

Victor Mbewu

materials; the training of Black literacy teachers; and teaching adults who are members of organizations working for change. "ELP aims to provide a thorough teacher training service in literacy techniques and non-authoritarian adult education methods. Back up service is provided to teachers through lesson notes, guidelines for adapting materials to suit students needs and a supportive monitoring service.

"Material is taught in such a way as to develop the self-confidence of students in a learning environment where they can discuss problems and define possible action toward changing their situation.

Lessons are sometimes organized in direct response to learners' requests. Learners have made requests for lessons pertaining to particular problems they have experienced such as reading salary slips; the use of contraception; uses of skin lightening creams; cancer of the cervix; reference books (the identification and labour registration documents which all Black people in South Africa are required to carry). These topics have been taken up in discussion".

Among the learners with which ELP works are women office cleaners organized by the Transport and General Workers Union. "Particular problems have been experienced around the organizing of classes for these women workers because of the difficult hours involved in office cleaning--from 6 p.m. until 3 a.m.--and the extra load of work women are expected to perform on arriving at their homes. Many of them sleep between 3 and 5 a.m. and then go home to perform household tasks before their next shift (i.e.2-3 hours sleep). The townships (segregated residence areas for Blacks) are noisy during the day so uninterrupted sleep only occurs early in the morning. Attention in class is obviously affected due to general exhaustion. (Management, it should be mentioned, does not give time off for classes). The problem of when to hold classes is further complicated by their being unable to leave for the townships after 6 p.m. because of public transport being dangerous for women after dark."

ELP has also been training shop stewards from the Black Domestic Workers Association (BLADWA) as literacy teachers and is involved in organizing literacy classes for domestic workers. "Because of the disparities in work conditions and hours, and their dispersal in different work places, it is extremely difficult to find a common time and place for domestic workers to gather for literacy training. Although Thursdays tend to be a "day off" for "maids", those women who "live in" must return to visit their families in the townships or do bureaucratic chores. This leaves Saturday afternoons only--subject to the dictates of their employers". Domestic workers thus tend to visit the BLADWA offices only if they feel assured that their time there will bring immediate benefits--concrete help with a problem, and a literacy training that relates very specifically to improving their work conditions and improving their chances of a better income. Domestic work is the most insecure, but often the only available form of employment--in terms of hours of work, conditions, wages, unemployment insurance and pension.

ELP writes: "The greatest progress amongst the women has been their growing confidence. They have learned to identify common problems and not react as isolated individuals. They no longer blame themselves for not being educated and take pride in skills they have apart from reading and writing".

E.L.P., 314 Durwell House, 35 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

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Creating Alternatives

Education: A special issue of Connexions: An International Women's Quarterly, Summer 1986, No. 21.

Linzi Manicom

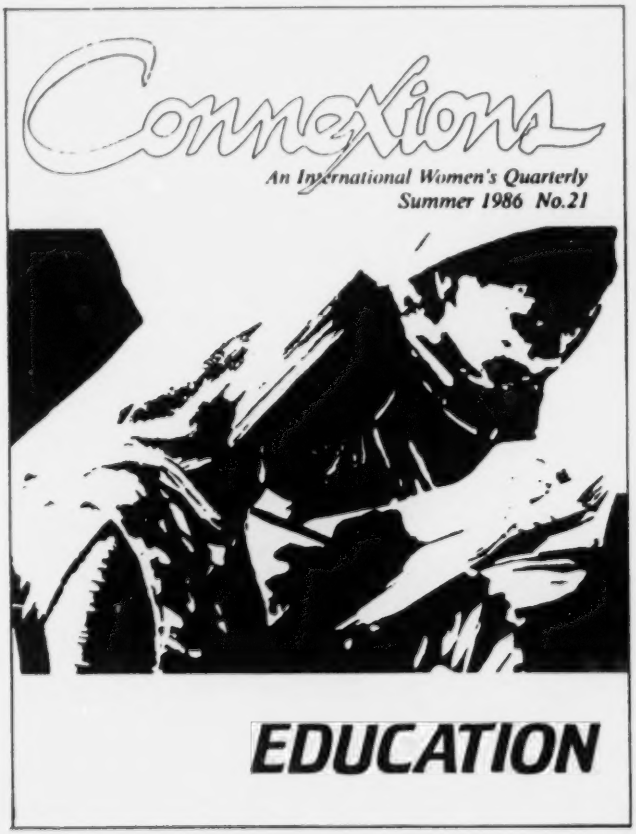
The recent issue of Connexions on the theme of Education contains a wealth of interesting articles from different parts of the world: the challenges of organizing schooling for children in the war-torn liberated zones of El Salvador; sex-segregated education in Saudi Arabia; consciousness-raising in Colombia; questioning the relevance of library systems to women peasants in Kenya; a debate about the significance of literacy for Zimbabwean women; popular education linked to women's productive activity in Bolivia; women learning non-traditional occupations in Morocco and Sweden, basic health care as the starting point of women's education in India. The range and creativity of the education activities in which women are involved is tremendous. And this is the point which the editorial of this issue takes up.

Cultural, political and sexual biases, it is pointed out, have tended to limit the definition of "education" to its formal, institutional forms. As a result, many of the ways in which women teach and learn are not recognized or credited. Formal education is often inaccessible or inappropriate to women's needs, serving "to reinforce the status quo by training women to fit into a patriarchal society", and constantly acting "to discourage and divert efforts toward social change". In response, women have created new structures and facilities, and this issue of Connexions focusses on these alternative means of education "both because they are a central aspect of women-centred education around the globe and because we feel that these alternatives contain more possibilities for growth and empowerment". Through these alternative forms of education "women can begin to identify the factors that limit their lives and begin to investigate ways to overcome obstacles and problems".

Establishing education programs that serve women both within and outside of formal education institutions has been neither simple nor unchallenged as the articles in this issue reveal. Women's studies programs within colleges and universities have had to struggle to maintain their integrity without becoming marginalised. And women who have been the object of many programs designed, implemented and evaluated by outsiders, have often had to contend with the misdirected and oppressive nature of the programs. The editors of Connexions sum up their position: "We feel that education as a tool for empowerment is most effective when it is controlled by women themselves who seek to learn - when they have the power to determine what and how they need to learn".

This special issue is available for $3.75US from:

Connexions
4228 Telegraph Avenue
Oakland, California
94609 USA



Resources

Rural Development and Women: Lessons from the Field

Margaret Gayfer, Editor of Convergence, describes two useful documents on the 'lessons learned' from a project of the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to identify and analyze the reasons for the success of projects in Asia and Africa that have improved the economic and social conditions of poor rural women.

Since 1982, the Program on Rural Women of the ILO has been engaged in a multi-bilateral project on Identification of Successful Projects for Improving the Employment Conditions of Rural Women funded by DANIDA, to better understand the dynamics of rural poverty and how some women are working to improve their situation.

The project helped researchers and activists to identify and document nearly 50 "successful" cases in Africa and Asia. They range from small-scale and locally initiated projects, sponsored and joint projects, and popular movements, which became more involved in women's economics as a result of women's participation.

A significant feature is that the study arose from the common concern among women researchers in Africa and Asia to move away from pure research on why rural development has not helped women. Instead, efforts are directed at documenting initiatives which are working to improve the economic and social conditions of poor rural women. These enrich our understanding of the mechanisms of rural poverty, and draw some lessons about the forces which promote and support such initiatives and the kinds of follow-up action needed.

Rural Development and Women: Lessons from the Field

The two-volume report of the project contains 16 case studies. Volume I (eleven cases) deals with "Women in Production and Marketing and Their Access to Credit". Volume II has two sections: "Organizations and Participation" (nine cases), and "Women in Movements and Ideological Conflicts" (five cases).

Important features in the success of many of the rural projects were women's access to and control over the productive resources: land, labour, capital, technology, marketing; control by women over the product of their labour; the development or strengthening of an organizational base among disadvantaged women; and sympathetic attitudes by the community, including husbands, and/or other external forces such as the government and aid agencies, or at least some individuals within them.

These publications are available in English only and are distributed free of charge while the supply lasts. They can be obtained through ILO offices in many countries, or directly from:

ILO Publications
International Labour Office
CH-1211
Geneva, Switzerland

Titus Nyande

Women's Kit

The Women's Kit is a series of nine booklets for women in literacy or English as Second Language programs. It is made up of material from women's groups in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Jamaica, Dominica, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico and England. The booklets focus on a number of women's issues including, childcare, housework, seeking paid work, conditions of paid work, health, violence, and organizing. A variety of aspects of the issues are addressed in each booklet through the use of excerpts from several countries.

The kit is intended as a tool for women to make links between their own situation and that of women in other countries. We wanted as far as possible to use material direct from women's groups, so some of the material is quite complicated and may need to be adapted for use with learners in literacy programs.

We encourage people to use the material as a basis for discussion and writing about women's own experience. The kit can be used as a whole, or individual booklets can be integrated in to many different kinds of work, in schools, discussion groups and adult programs.

The booklets cost $2.50 each or $20 for the whole kit ($35 for institutions). For more information and ordering please contact:

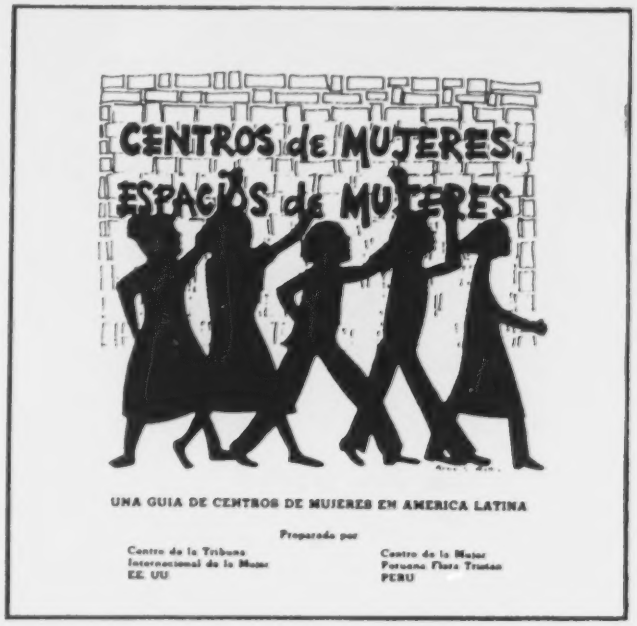
Participatory Research Group
229 College Street, Suite 309
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 1R4

Lessening the Burden for African Women

This is a series of eleven case studies which examine locally sponsored, community based development projects in eight African countries. The projects are run by and for women, and operate in four sectors, including food, water, health and energy.

Produced and distributed by the United Nations, single copies of the case studies are available free of charge from:

United Nations Non-Governmental Liason Service
DC 2-Rm.1103
New York, N.Y.
10017 USA


CENTROS de MUJERES
ESPACIOS de MUJERES
UNA GUIA DE CENTROS DE MUJERES EN AMERICA LATINA
Preparado por
Centro de la Tribuna Internacional de la Mujer EE. UU
Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristan PERU

Centros de Mujeres, Espacios de Mujers (Women's Centers, Women's Spaces) (236pages, Spanish only).

Centros is a recent joint publication of the International Women's Tribune Center (New York) and Centro de la Mujer, Peruana Flora Tristan (Lima, Peru). It is a directory of over 125 women's centers in Latin America which in addition to the name and direction of each center, includes a brief description of the history, activities, programs and publications. The introductory article by Roxanna Carrillo of Flora Tristan provides an interesting analysis of the significance of women's centers in the development of the women's movement in Latin America.

To order write:

International Women's Tribune Center
777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY
10017 USA
or
Centro de la Mujer Peruana
Flora Tristan
Parque Hernan Velarde 42
Lima 1, Peru

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Voices Rising is distributed to over 1000 organizations and individuals around the world. Until now we have sent it free of charge. We simply cannot afford to continue to do this. With this issue we are requesting that institutions, organizations and individuals who can afford it, pay an annual subscription fee. We hope that those of you who can will contribute, to enable others to receive the Bulletin free of charge. Thank you.

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Canada M5T 1R4

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April/May 1988
VOLUME 2, 1988

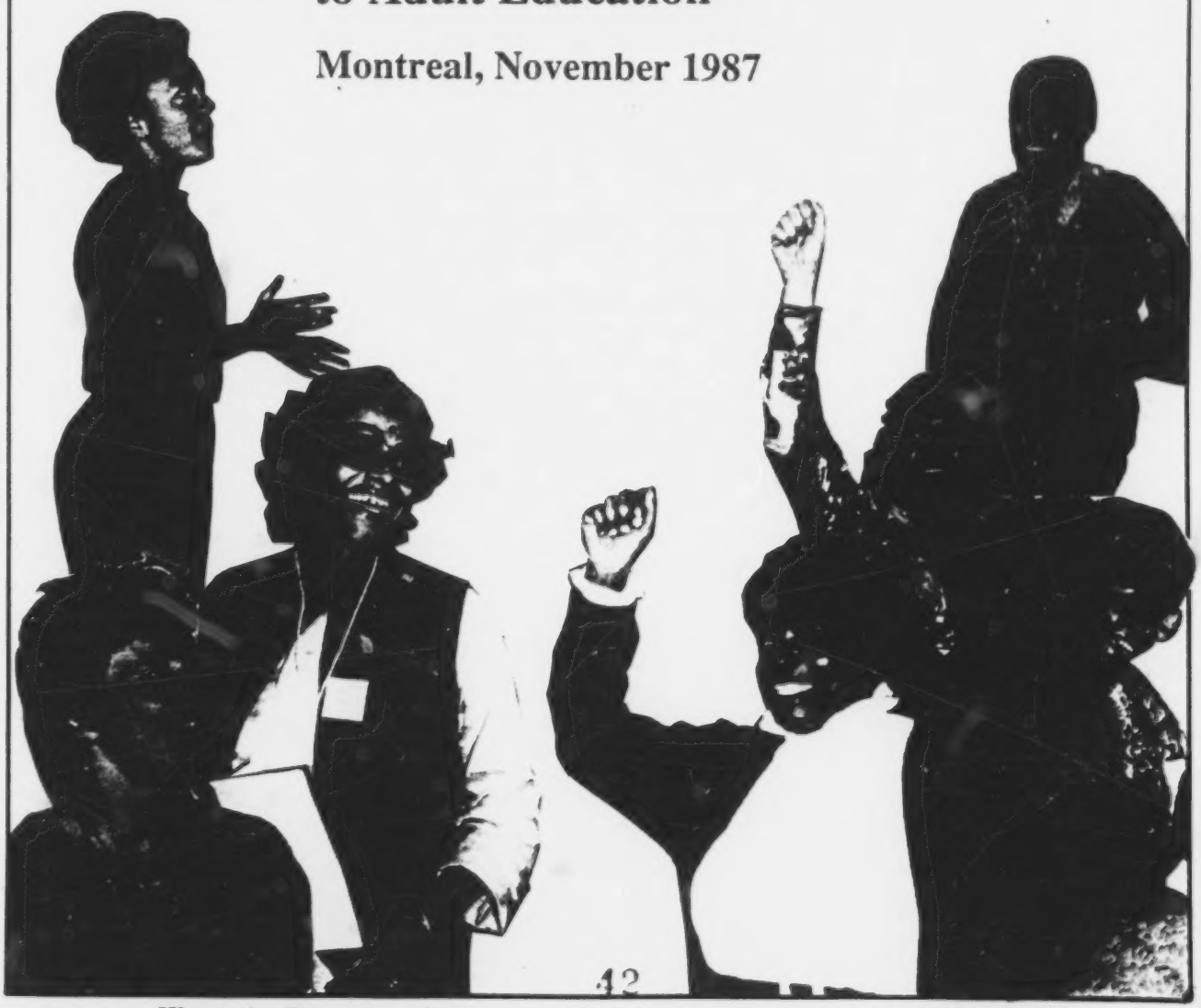
Voices Rising

A Bulletin About Women and Popular Education

Special Report:

"The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education"

Montreal, November 1987



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April/May 1988

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Voices Rising

A Bulletin About Women and Popular Education

Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, which aims to: promote the sharing of experiences; provide a forum for discussion and debate of key issues for women; share information on useful resources; and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face daily.

We welcome letters or short articles on your work and experiences. Through your contributions and involvement we can deepen our understanding and develop more effective strategies for action.

Voices Rising is published twice yearly in English, Spanish and French.

The Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and the empowerment of women.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is an international non-governmental organization with national member associations in over 90 countries, as well as networks in a variety of program areas including: peace, literacy, community health and popular education, workers' education, and participatory research. All programs are decentralized and coordinated by individuals and groups in different regions of the world.

The Women's Program is coordinated from Canada by the Participatory Research Group (PRG) working in collaboration with key contacts from various regions. PRG is a popular education and research collective. At present we are working primarily on Native Canadian and women's issues. PRG is also active in an international participatory research and popular education network.

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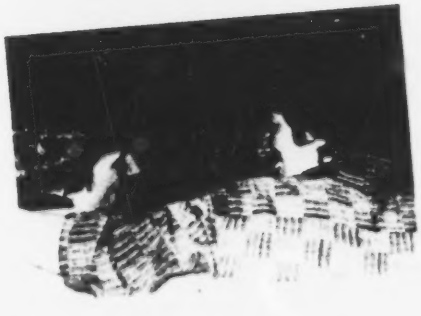

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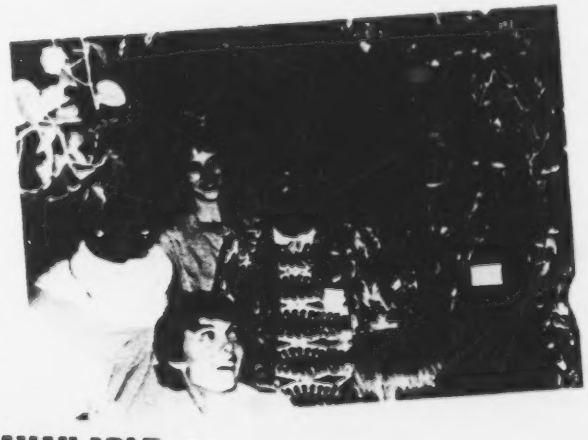
cover photos and photos this page: Rachel Epstein



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Sharing Our Spirit

I'm going to tell you a bit about my work, how I got involved in the Women's Program, and what is the relevance of the Women's Program located here in Canada for me.

A lot of Free Trade Zones have been established since the late 1960s in my country. The Free Trade Zones hire mainly young women workers, who come from the rural areas to find work. My educational work is with those women workers.

Many people here ask me what organization I come from. It seems odd, but we don't come from an organization of workers because the women workers are not themselves yet organized. What we have been able to do in the last few years is to set up a center which is run and managed by the workers. But just before I left, we actually closed our center. One of the major reasons is security, because the center is not officially registered and it is very hard to get registration.

I feel that in this kind of a context, the ICAE Women's Program has a lot of relevance. My very presence here, to be able to participate and relate to others who are engaged in similar work, has a lot of importance for our region. Yesterday a few of us--from Latin America and Asia--shared the stories of our organizations. And it hit me that everywhere it is a story of women struggling to survive. Women workers are in constant struggle to survive, not just for economic livelihood, but against the political situation, and against the employers.

And secondly, me--I myself am a struggling woman, constantly struggling to survive in the context of the kinds of things that I try to do. In my country, there are few people who are actively engaged in grassroots organizing work. So there is a great sense of loneliness, and that loneliness is very, very difficult to fight in the context of the kind of political repression that we encounter.

In particular, we have to face repressive laws. When we were heavily involved in organizing the non-unionized Free Trade Zone workers, we were continually harassed by the police--they would follow us. Because I earn my livelihood by doing another job, they often have put pressure on me through the place where I work. I've often nearly lost my job.

So this is very real evidence of the struggle to survive, and for us, and for me in particular, it's important to participate in this meeting. I hope to find friends, to find reconsolidation from meeting them, to assess my work, and to relate with the people here who are also engaged in this kind of work. The stories I hear from others are very significant, because they are like mirrors to my own situation. This will become a basis for me to reflect and learn how people approach the work.

For me the greatest strength of a seminar like this is the feeling of not being isolated, the feeling that you are with people who are doing the same work, who are trying to be strong, who are trying to survive, who are still trying to fight. And I will really want to bring back your spirit, not just for myself, but for the people I work with back in home.

From an opening presentation at the Montreal seminar by a participant who cannot be named.

The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education:

Highlights of a Seminar

The focus of this Voices Rising *is "The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education," a seminar which we co-sponsored with the Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes last November in Montreal, Quebec. Through this collection of articles, presentations, interviews and workshop reports from the seminar we hope to share some of the "highlights" and to extend the discussions to those of you who were not there. We're especially excited to be publishing* Voices Rising *in French for the first time. The important contribution and active involvement of Francophone women in the seminar made us all the more aware of the necessity of ensuring that our network extends to and incorporates the experience of Francophone women.*

First, why another international meeting? We wanted to bring together women educators and organizers from around the world: to share our different experiences doing education work with women, to advance the analysis and debate on central issues, to extend the international network of educators and to strengthen the perspective and position of women within the adult education movement internationally. We also wanted to increase the active involvement of women and groups from our network in determining future directions and priorities for the Women's Program and in our ongoing work and activities.

About 100 women took part in the five days of meetings, workshops, and study-visits: 11 women from Africa, 14 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 10 from Asia, 1 from Australia, 13 from Europe, 6 from the U.S., and 21 each from Quebec and Canada--including seminar organizers. Participants came from popular education groups, women's organizations, adult education institutions, trade unions, and national liberation movements. We're working as grassroots educators, as feminist activists, as coordinators of programs and networks, as researchers and writers, and in different fields of adult education--in literacy, popular theatre, worker education, feminist consciousness raising, and political organizing.

The diverse experiences and perspectives enriched (and yes, sometimes made more difficult) the sharing and discussions that took place through the days and nights in workshops, over meals, on walks, and in hotel rooms. The seminar reconfirmed the importance of pushing ourselves to learn about the different contexts and educational work being done in other regions.

Jude Binder

Several themes emerged during the seminar: the need to strengthen both the notion and practice of feminist popular education, the importance of international solidarity and networking, the contradictions we face as women education workers, and the difficulties that result from the lack of sufficient funding and other support for our work. Some of these are explored in this *Voices Rising*; others will be taken up in future issues. In the next issue of *Voices Rising* we will also concentrate on material which emerged from the seminar, namely, literacy work--in the United States and in Southern Africa.

The meaning and significance of "feminism" was a recurring debate at the seminar. Although all of us are committed to fighting for women's equality, there clearly are profound differences between us, deriving largely from the different social, economic and political contexts in which we work. Some of us are working under conditions of a daily struggle for survival, fighting wars of occupation, or are involved in national liberation struggles. Others are combatting

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Crossing Mental Barriers

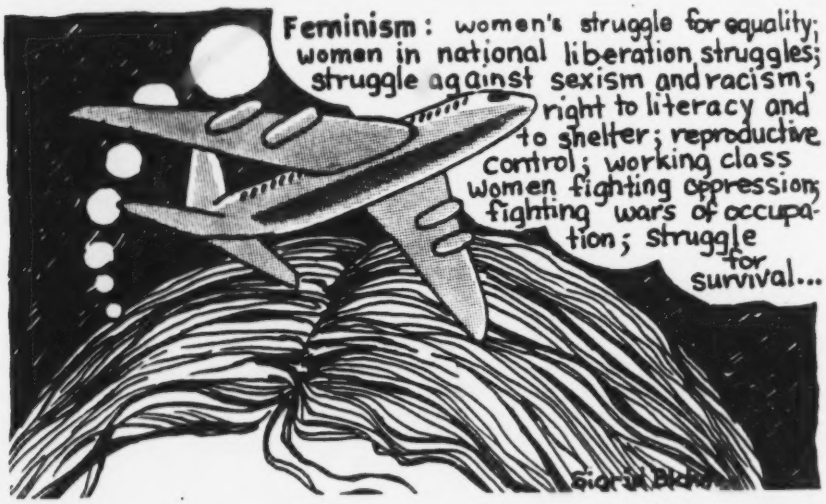
Days before I left the Philippines, I was actually preparing myself for the gruelling trip--meaning the plane changes, the 18 hour flight and the many time zones I had to cross. In the last days, I found that such preparation was inadequate. It is relatively easy to cross physical barriers compared to the mindsets that Third World women have to confront, understand and critique as we meet women from the First World.

When we Third World women come to First World countries, there are so many expectations of us. We are expected to appreciate and fit into the highly technological societies we come into contact with. We are shuttled to and from First World women's groups to learn from them. We have to listen to First World women as they articulate their anxieties, their problems and their issues. In many instances, we are expected to adopt First World women's conception of feminism.

Third World women have to stop fitting into such stereotypes. We Third World women have to collectively structure our realities and move forward so that this time First World women will listen to our problems, will be sensitive to our work and hopefully in the end, will support Third World movements.

Media has not helped us to understand the different realities in which we live. In fact, more often than not it is the media which is responsible for distorting our images of one another. While we have begun to communicate through alternative media, it is in venues like this that we are able to discuss and exchange views on the existing socio-political realities which are not touched on or are glossed over by the media.

From a presentation at the seminar by Carol Anoneuvo, Center for Women's Resources, Philippines.


Feminism: women's struggle for equality; women in national liberation struggles; struggle against sexism and racism; right to literacy and to shelter; reproductive control; working class women fighting oppression; fighting wars of occupation; struggle for survival...

racial and cultural oppression, claiming rights such as reproductive control, literacy and shelter, or working to create alternate forms of culture and communication. Speaking from their own political realities and struggles, participants discussed ways "feminism" has been taken up in the Third and First World, and its relationship to other struggles.

Our different points of view were reflected in discussions about how and where women should focus their work. Many Third World women argued that women should work within popular social and national liberation movements. Taking the point further, some argued that gender and class oppression are integrally interwoven and to focus only on working class or national oppression without addressing the social divisions of gender narrows the full meaning and objective of social liberation. Another view was that women are best able to develop their positions within autonomous women-only groups.

All agreed however that important work could be done at both levels--within mixed organizations, as well as in women-only groups where there may be more possibilities for developing a feminist analysis. And, we agreed that whatever the context of our work we need to find ways of supporting each other and of maintaining the space to formulate a clear political project *as* women.

Participants talked about the challenge of building solidarity between working-class and poor women from different countries, who share many common experiences. One workshop addressed the question of how to work with our differences in class and in race. Participants felt feminist adult education must be defined in ways that take account of the overwhelming impact of imperialism on women's lives. Only on this basis will we find new ways of creating a more

genuine basis of unity and collaboration.

It was agreed that popular education is an essential tool in our work. Central to its conception is taking the standpoint of the oppressed, of linking immediate issues with broader social struggles, and of moving from personal and lived experience to political understanding.

Feminism and popular education is the focus of two articles. Rocio Rosero writes about developments in Latin America; Carol Anoneuvo talks about the practice in the Philippines. The reality is that women's experience within popular education has not been problem-free.

Although popular education has always defined itself as a process of liberation, it too has tended to reinforce oppressive gender stereotypes. This needs to change.

Social movements and popular education groups have to be pushed to see the importance of integrating gender issues into all questions.

As educators, we must find ways to break through the--almost universal--historical and cultural silencing of women, and to once again raise women's voices. As part of this, it is crucial that we find forms of education which neither add to the burden of women's lives nor intimidate and silence them. Many women talked about trying to weave their educational practice into women's daily activities, such as preparing food, washing clothes, caring for children. Traditional forms of women's culture were also suggested as valuable sites for doing education work.

A Critique

Popular education is meaningless if it isn't rooted in a popular movement and that entire political space in the U.S. went unrepresented at the seminar. None of the U.S. participants were women of colour. This contributed to an atmosphere in which discussions were repeatedly framed in terms of the differences between the privileged North and the struggling Third World.

The fact is, though, that every one of the divisions/tensions/debates that emerged at the conference--from whether or not we call ourselves feminist, to whether the women's struggle is overshadowed by the national struggle, to how women can attend educational programs given their daily survival struggle--exist within the U.S. as well as between the U.S. and Third World countries. They exist as contradictions of class and race, as well of nations. Poor women and women of colour within the U.S. have posed many of the same criticisms and challenges to the vision of feminism, of organizing, of education as have Third World women. In this context, to create an environment in which the U.S. is represented only by types of organizations that are based in affluent white communities poses serious limitations on the debate and interchange that can occur.

It is a fact that in the U.S. there is a major division between movements and organizations addressing "international" and domestic issues. This division is in large part a class division--so that very often in international forums only views based in relatively affluent white sectors are included. Obviously, the division is a deeply destructive one for our movements, and some of the most exciting and creative political work I am aware of has to do with grassroots groups claiming the space to take up international concerns, drawing the links between the conditions they face inside the U.S. and conditions outside.

I think that it is crucial for groups like the Women's Program to start thinking about ways to build stronger ties that go outside the official international feminist circuits in the U.S. and reach into grassroots movements, especially movements based in communities of colour. These are the constituencies that are authentically parallel to the types of Third World groups among whom you seem to concentrate your networking efforts, and where there are, therefore the most promising possibilities for building solidarity.

From a letter by Rachel Kamel, Women's Program, American Friends Service Committee.

I think all women who are struggling for equality must say, "this is part and parcel of the struggle for equality and rights of all people." But I'd like to add, "don't ask us to support or identify with those women who believe in apartheid. Don't ask us to identify with women who believe in the Israeli-occupied territories. Don't ask us to identify with the women who support the contras in Nicaragua."

From a speech given by Leila Zakhareya, Najdeh Association, Lebanon, as part of the panel on "Women's Movements around the World."

We Ask You to Join in Our Struggle

International solidarity, global sisterhood--these are what we need today. We say that to be a true feminist one must also be an internationalist. Although women are separated geographically, culturally, economically and politically, we experience the same exploitation and oppression because of our gender. At the same time, the forces that subjugate women have been so internationalized that unity and action of women worldwide is necessary.

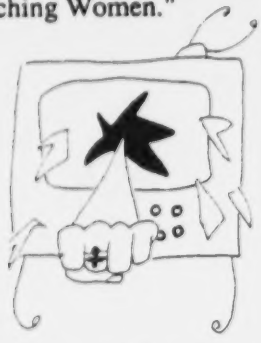
In this regard, we ask you first, among other things, to be one with us in the struggle against U.S. intervention in our country so that our women, along with the rest of the Filipino people can chart their own destiny. We ask for your support so that the U.S. will stop sending military aid to the Philippines, remove its military bases, desist from directing and masterminding counter-insurgency programs, and leave the affairs of the Philippines to the Filipinos alone.

We ask you to join in our protest to the Aquino government to stop militarization in our country, to disband right-wing vigilante groups, to prosecute human rights violators, and to stop the sexual abuse, trafficking and prostitution of our women.

From our end, we commit ourselves to expanding and enriching our relations with our sisters in common struggle and unity. For it is only in common struggle that we will witness our liberation as a people, as women.

From a speech given by a participant from the Philippines as part of the panel on "Women's Movements around the World."

Participants shared different non-verbal forms of expression that are effective in helping women analyze their lives. Women's drawings, for example, can reveal a very clear understanding of imperialism and its effect on their everyday lives. Or photographs and videos can be used to reflect back real and powerful images. The development of alternative communication is explored in the report on the media workshop, called "Reaching Women."



ISIS, *Women and Media*

Hilary Nicholson began the discussion of how we organize ourselves as education workers. Many of us are attempting to build organizations that support democracy and equality among members. We're working to promote women's decision-making capacity at the same time as grappling with differences in class, race, culture, skills, and age. We are fighting to combat traditional divisions of labour and to promote women's role and perspectives.

Hilary explored how class manifests itself as a political issue within groups. Many popular educators are middle class in background and culture, while the women they work with are of the popular classes. Participants talked about struggling with their guilt and also about searching for ways of constructively coming to terms with relations of class, gender and, often, race. Some groups actively orient their work toward ensuring that working-class women develop skills in education and assume control of

Her Feminism was Rich, Mine Lacking

My introduction to adult literacy was in Tanzania where we launched a big campaign on adult literacy. I participated in "teaching" in one of the villages, and I happily went to "teach" the peasants how to read and write.

One day, out of teaching hours, I saw my "student." She was walking home with a hoe in one hand, a child on her back, a load on her head, and another child holding her other hand, while her partner walked totally free from any load.

On seeing this my "feminist" anger rose. Next day in the class, I asked her why her husband does not help. She allowed me to let out all my anger about how this equality we want has to be shared by men. Having been exposed to notions of equality as conceived by the international community at the University of Dar es Salaam, I was quite influenced.

She listened patiently and told me that even if he had offered, she would refuse. She said that the child on her back is hers, the load is hers as it comes from her land, and the hoe is also hers, and the child holding her hand is hers. "I have a plot of land in this village given to me by my father. If I let my husband put an ounce of labour into it, he has the right to claim the fruit of his labour according to communal laws of the village. Slowly the land would become his."

That was my first lesson in adult literacy. By imposing a concept without any knowledge of the situation, I was going to undermine whatever rights she had. She was the literate one, not only teaching me my first lesson in feminism, but also communal concepts of democracy whereby one reaps the fruit of his or her labour.

An intervention by Fatma Alloo, Tanzania, at the opening session.

projects. Women in one workshop emphasized the importance of developing women leaders from the popular classes who remain accountable and committed to their base. It was agreed we need to continually challenge ourselves within our organizations and in our practice.

Time (or more accurately, the lack of time) was another common concern. Like the women we work with, we too are pressed to balance work-time with the (too often contradictory) needs of children, housework, and partners and friends. The stress involved in trying to meet these responsibilities detracts from our effectiveness. How can we avoid feeling that we need to be "superwomen" who can do and balance everything?

Funding was a major issue. Participants shared frustrations regarding chronic and ongoing inadequate funding. Funders are usually more interested in supporting specific projects than in offering the core or institutional funding needed to maintain our groups. Funding agencies have first to be persuaded that educational work is a process and thus cannot easily be broken into separate projects with defined objectives. Secondly, funders must be made to see that the central resource for the educational process are popular educators themselves, who must be directly supported in the form of funding for salaries.

Another problem was how funders' criteria and requirements shape the possibilities and (priorities) of educational work with women. In fact, this problem had an impact on the seminar itself: although the Women's Program was able to find money to bring participants from the Third World, the funders we approached were not prepared to assist grassroots women's groups from the U.S., for example. As Rachel Kamel from the U.S. points out, this structured the nature of U.S. participation at the seminar.

The profile of participants from industrialized countries probably reinforced the stereotypic notion of "First World" women as middle class. It also reinforced a stereotypic view of "feminism." But lumping together all women from industrial--and imperialist--countries in this way only increases the invisibility of oppression, and denies the struggles that working-class and poor people are waging in industrialized countries and the different political approaches to feminism that have developed in relation to these struggles.

The seminar was a turning point for the Women's Program. It was our first opportunity to bring together women from our network, some of whom we'd had contact with for years; others who we hoped to get to know through the seminar. Despite our busy timetable in Montreal, we managed to squeeze in discussions about future directions for the Women's Program and to get a sense of the responsibilities other groups were willing to take on, as well as what they needed and expected from the program office.

Meetings like this are vital opportunities for women educators who often work in isolation to come together, share and network. Participants agreed that extending and facilitating those links should continue as priorities for the the Women's Program--through meetings, information exchange, and *Voices Rising*. But in addition participants wanted opportunities for "deeper" learning experiences for education activists, perhaps in the form of longer-term exchange visits between women in different countries, particularly from one Third World region to another.

We learned a tremendous amount from the experience of Montreal. Despite some problems, Montreal also showed all of us how far we have come in defining and struggling around the issues arising from the "Feminist Challenge to Adult Education." It affirmed the necessity of sharing and exchange. Participants left Montreal with a stronger commitment to building links between women educators. And, being among so many strong and creative women inspired us, and gave us renewed strength to keep pushing.

We hope the issues addressed in *Voices Rising* will provoke you. We look forward to sharing your views in future issues. ■

The Starting Point of Solidarity . . .

Our center was established in 1983 to address the same issue that Carol Anonuevo raised in her presentation--the fundamental role played by foreign political and economic intervention in causing poverty in the Third World.

Since many Japanese companies go to other Asian countries to exploit women workers, we--the Japanese people--have some responsibility to them. The Japanese government also has very strong and influential relationships with Asian governments which are very dictatorial, anti-communist and militarist. Our task is to let the Japanese people--especially women workers--know the reality of women workers in Asian countries, and to build solidarity between Japanese and Asian workers. And of course, we have to work to change Japanese society itself. So we have to understand our own reality also.

At the same time we would like people in Asia to know the real situation of people in Japan. Many Asian people think that Japanese people are very rich, but that's not true. This is the starting point of solidarity--to know and understand each other.

From comments by Michiko Hiroki, Center for Asian Women Workers' Fellowship, Japan, as part of a discussion about solidarity in one of the workshops.

Upstream, Canada

Developments in Latin America

Rocio Rosero

Rocio Rosero is the Coordinator of the Women's Popular Education Network of the Consejo de Educacion de Adultos de America Latina (CEAAL), the regional affiliate of the ICAE in Latin America. This article is based on a presentation that Rocio gave at the opening session of the Montreal seminar. A complete version has been published in the new Isis booklet on feminism and popular education (see p.12)

The history of women's participation in Latin America illustrates that there were many different motivations and stimuli in their mobilization and organization: economic and social demands, the struggle for democracy, resistance to dictatorships. Most of these responded to women's immediate interests and situations. External factors, like churches, political parties, trade unions, and cooperatives also prompted participation and organization. In all of these, the experience gathered by women's groups and organizations has not only served to legitimize women's issues, but more fundamentally, has articulated an original and challenging proposal for change in the ongoing search for a common path to economic growth and social justice within a genuinely democratic system.

The strength and growing advancement of popular movements in Latin America during the last fifteen years resulted in the incorporation of new groups and in the search for new methodologies to express the practice and perspectives of broad sectors that have until now been marginalized in the analysis of social reality as well as in projects of political transformation.

Given the current economic, social and political context in our countries, many women have begun to participate in a more direct fashion in social movements. However this participation has had many difficulties and limitations as a result of the contradictions present both in the home and in the popular organizations, where traditional mechanisms of subordination of women to men are being reproduced. Unfortunately, women from popular sectors and many of us working to support their struggle, have not found space or adequate means to work on these contradictions, either in the popular or feminist movements.

In the popular movements it is still accepted that women's organization and struggle impairs and disorients the people's struggle from its fundamental issue. Popular education, for its part, has not acknowledged gender differences.

There is indeed a contradiction in this process: on the one hand, the popular education movement generates space for organization, reflection, recovering of popular culture and thus for those day-to-day issues that are so important for women; on the other hand, the feminist movement, starting from the central issue of feminine identity, projects this framework onto collective issues of culture, critical reflection and social organization. Yet there is no automatic encounter. In the case of popular education, women's issues are seldom aimed to confront central problems, if faced at all. The feminist movement works with great intensity on these issues, though experiencing difficulties in joining with other kinds of social issues and movements.

One of the main challenges of popular education amongst women, from a feminist perspective, is the formulation of a pedagogical proposal which would include reflection and analysis of women's lives, prioritizing the analysis of experiences and attitudes. This new pedagogical proposal implies an ideological change in women's perception of themselves and of their role in society. It is a new concept of liberation, one that assumes all dimensions of the human project.

The feminist perspective in popular education raises the need for starting from women's own reality, "giving value to the domestic space, to women's reproductive role, their sexuality, their right to pleasure, as integral human beings who should not be kept as instruments of oppression but transformed into agents of struggle and liberation. (Women's Network - CEAAL, 1986)

(continued p. 11)

ISIS *Women and Media*

A View From the Caribbean

The encounter between feminism and popular education could not be more frustrating. Popular education in Latin America does not escape, in its conceptual framework, from the lack of a gender perspective. Asexual popular education is presented as a pedagogy for the action of the "people", for raising "consciousness", amalgamating in the category "people" not only men and women, but also diverse realities and ways of approaching practice and daily life . . . This ambiguity often hides paternalistic and populist visions and the absence of many things, including a clear commitment to socialism and . . . a clear commitment to the radical elimination of sexual hierarchies.

Given that popular education has arisen tied to the Left and the church--even though this is often thought to be a negative dialectic--it has been strongly prejudiced against the focus on gender, feeding gender prejudices with its populism and its taboos and almost always considering feminism as petty bourgeois, if not totally bourgeois and deviationist.

For many educators and popular educators, work "with" women means mobilizing them for action solely in regard to demands for water, light, health and other problems of their neighborhoods and communities. More, even when much of the neighborhood or community work is nothing else than work with the women of these areas, this reality is made to disappear by sleight of hand in order to deny studying, working, discussing and bringing up issues which derive from their particular situation as women and not only from their role as mothers.

Sexuality, abandonment, physical mistreatment, rape and authoritarianism in the family are almost always outside the scope of discussion in popular education or are approached with a timidity that comes from considering these problems as belonging to the private world, or as strictly personal.

Magaly Pineda, Centro de Investigación Participativa para la Acción Feminina (CIPAF), Dominican Republic, from "Feminism and Popular Education," Quehaceres, *July 1986.*

The Challenges of a Feminist Popular Education

Our objective was to go further, to discover ourselves as women, to become conscious of our reality as women, because, within the poor, we are much more marginalized, we have never been taught, nor have we been considered as persons. (Unión Popular de Mujeres de Loja, 1985).

"To go further" means to recognize our values and to discover the oppression in our daily lives. This is only possible through education, learning to act towards change in an organized way, and in solidarity. So popular education amongst women is a complete process whose basic characteristics are a continuous, coherent and permanent action, working with groups organized for social change.

"To go further" means then to work on our identity as social subjects starting from our own experiences as women.

- In the dimension of our affections: sexuality, personal inter-communication, and couple's relationships.
- As workers: in domestic work, in earning an income, in our professional lives.
- As citizens: in relation to our civil and political rights, to our participation in organizing, and to our militancy.
- As mothers: our reproductive capacity, the functioning of our body, our health, and our work as educators.
- As daughters: our own education, our development, our hopes.
- As carriers of life, in the defense of our own dignity and in the struggle against violence.

"To go further" means enhancing the autonomy in women's development and organization; our consciousness must develop the ability to undertake greater decisions in our own organizations as well as in broader social and political tasks. Our consciousness must empower us at all levels to articulate ourselves in egalitarian conditions in social life.

"To go further" means the enormous responsibility of working within a new perspective of democratizing daily life and of adopting alternative working mechanisms that would allow us to give political character to daily experience.

"To go further" means, in the words of Carmen Tornaría, to define a group practice where we could recognize "the woman self, where personal aspects are enlightened."

- The "women selves," where we make our experience a collective one, where we find our common ground. We find ourselves as an oppressed group and we learn about other known ways of domination.
- The moment for answers, where werealize that domestic life is also political and it is a link to social transformation.
- The mom[illegible]t for action, towards and outside ourselves. To change the family environment, to plan an education consistent with our questioning, to become agents of a new project for change, to reach the neighbourhood, the community, the workplace, the union, the Party. To coordinate actions with other autonomous social groups and influence the whole social structure.

"To go further" means to accept that feminism is a political project which has been historically absent and which articulates with other political projects from a gender viewpoint. Feminism isn't the only project. Feminism articulates with class and ethnic issues and reflects on the reality and the practice of the social movements. (Women's Network--CEAAL 1986)

"To go further" means also that we are struggling to achieve not only popular education amongst women, but changing the whole of popular education into a practice that questions all oppressive power relations. Popular education must emphasize

demands coming from women's daily oppressive condition.

"To go further" means to advance together with women of popular sectors, to develop with them reflection and consciousness of their problems, defying traditional methods and practices.

Women's struggle is a vital, transcendental and historical process. It is vital because it commits us in our family, working and social life; it is transcendental because it doesn't stay in ourselves but is aimed at global social change. It is historical because it confronts a traditionally discriminatory order to generate a new life, an alternative historical project, a project for an integral human society.

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Popular Education Among Women Network
Consejo Educacion de Adultos de America Latina
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Sucursal 15

Suggested Readings:

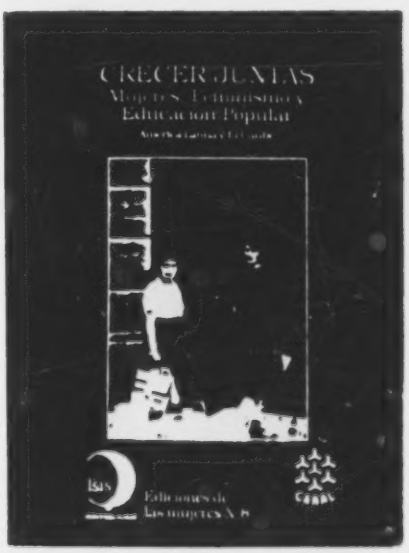
Crecer Juntas, Mujeres, Feminismo y Education Popular, (To Grow Together, Women, Feminism and Popular Education) Isis, Ediciones de las mujeres No. 8, 1987. (see below)

*Carta Trimestra*l (Spanish) The newsletter of the CEAAL network of Popular Education Among Women. (Spanish)

Taller Latino Americano Sobre Feminismo y Educación Popular, Rocio Rocero, ed.(Spanish) Report from a workshop which took place in December 1985 to discuss and debate the relationship between popular education and feminism.

Crecer Juntas, Mujeres, Feminismo y Educacion Popular

ISIS/CEAAL, 1987, 101pp. (Spanish--available soon in English and French)
The articles in this issue document and reflect on the experiences of groups which have developed a popular education approach in their work with women including experiences of groups in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic and Venezuela. This issue could be used as an important tool in promoting discussion of popular education in relation to the struggle for women's equality and liberation.
Cost: US$6.
Spanish version and information on the English and French versions available from: ISIS Internacional, Casilla 2067, Correo Central, Santiago, CHILE.



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Our Practice in the Philippines

Carol Anonuevo, Center for Women's Resources, The Philippines

The majority of the people in Third World countries live in dire poverty. The landlessness of the peasants, the low wages of the workers, increasing unemployment rates and repressive political systems are among the many realities Third World countries share. Connected by a new international economic order, our so-called development programs are no other than adjuncts of multinational corporations and American political interests. People live day in and day out without actually having control of their lives. Governments and multinationals have structured their living patterns, whether be it sleeping, buying or thinking. It is the task of progressive mass movements to alter this state of affairs.

It is important and necessary that women's education should figure prominently in such conscientization work. The reality however is that in many Third World countries, nationalist educators have neglected this aspect. It is a recent phenomena that education programs for women are integrating popular education modules. In the Philippines, we are slowly reaping the rich experiences of women all over the country as grassroots women organizers begin to incorporate the women's dimension into their efforts.

It is clear to many women educators and organizers that the primary objective of women's education is to equip women with knowledge and skills to be able to understand their realities. We believe that it is only after a thorough analysis and understanding of their own situation that women are empowered to take control over their lives and collectively shape their own future.

We at the Center have recently published *How Do We Liberate Ourselves? Understanding our Oppression, Working for Emancipation*--a module for use by different groups and organizations. The content of this education program has been the cause of much discussion among us. Moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar, the first part of the module is on the awareness of the body and understanding the self as it is shaped by the different factors of socialization. In this way women begin by sharing their stories, out of which they develop a

Center for Women's Resources

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visualization of their respective life stories. From that base women are better able to identify exactly how the church, the educational system and mass media have taught and reinforced existing stereotypes. The next part is a discussion of the conditions of women in different classes. Here women have the opportunity to see the particular conditions of women workers, peasant women, urban poor women and indigenous people and at the same time can appreciate the conditions like the double burden which they share. After this, the various laws that discriminate against women are discussed.

To recognize the historical roots of women's oppression, we emphasize the history of Philippine society and how women have contributed to resistance movements or in some cases, how they have been left out. This ensures that earlier discussions are not seen as separate women's issues. The fundamental issues of backwardness and foreign economic and political intervention are likewise discussed. The last part of the module tackles the different options for action, that is, various concrete measures women can undertake to change their situation.

In the process of giving the modules to workers, peasant women, urban poor and middle class women, we have become more sensitive to the different education requirements not only in terms of the content of the program but more importantly, in the methods we use. Lectures did not sit too well with grassroots women but were quite acceptable to middle class women. In general, theatre presentations were effective as well as discussion groups. We realize that it is necessary to develop more able facilitators for such workshops. In sum, there should be a good mix of inputs, discussions and workshops. We should be conscious enough to know the right time for evoking participation and for having lectures.

In the last year-and-a-half that we have been giving education programs and training other women educators, the most important lesson that we have learned is the need for constant evaluation and assessment of the modules in terms of their relevance. The module can only serve the purpose of empowerment if it is seen as connected to and integrated with the everyday lives of women. It is therefore not simply a matter of discussing women's problems or issues like poverty or landlessness but it is important to see how women are affected by such poverty. A frank assessment of the positive and negative aspects of the module is therefore a necessary step throughout the education process.

Today we are happy to see that after a thorough analysis of their situation many women in the Philippines have transcended their homes and have set their sights on national issues. No longer tied down to the ideology of sexism, women have recognized the intimate and undeniable link of women's oppression and the country's underdevelopment. Alternative education is a vital part of organizing, and the women's movement in the Philippines led by GABRIELA, will see to it that the women's dimension--often left out in progressive mass movements--will be a necessary and integral component of the movement for sovereignty and freedom. ■

Based on a presentation at the seminar

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Suggested Readings:

How Do We Liberate Ourselves? Understanding Our Oppression, Working for Emancipation, by the Center for Women's Resources, Philippines, 1987

"CWR: Building the Filipino Women's Movement" in *Voices Rising*, May/June 1987. An interview with two members of the Center for Women's Resources about the work of the Center.

Piglas-Diwa -- Issues and Trends about Women of the Philippines, Newsletter of the Center for Women's Resources.

Determining New Directions for Women's Education

Women
Don't let the changing times
the changing technology
mean technology changing hands
Don't lose your ground in the game
they call "development"

Dare to demand education that is real
employment that has rewards
engagement in life
effective voices in the future

Take hold of what you have
of what you know and do already
keep it
caress it
cultivate it
Call improvements to your corner
Put a progress in your part

Capture innovations and invent

Crush ways of learning
and strategies of work
which cut your options

Beware the tricks of "training for women"
special projects
deceptive education
token extension
illusive equality
that starts and ends at home . . .
as housewives
"having little or no opportunity
to actively engage
enthusiastically participate
in all forms of social and economic life"

Don't be trained, taught, educated . . .
to occupy yourself with trivia
the "toy" development
of household trappings
and the things they call "women's work"
yet ridicule and dismiss
in the analysis of "real" work
of man-hours
and man-made definitions of development

Be cautioned against contrivances
(in the hand craft, needle craft . . .
mothercraft, childcraft)
claiming to refine your competence
crown your role while actually
crippling your potential

Go forward
not backward
Be hold
not building
Seize time
Seize training opportunities
Teach yourselves
and set your own horizons

Take note
Take care
Take courage
Take hold firmly
of tools
and technology
Take part fiercely in the future
Take stock of changing times
and take on a stake in training

Be all that you can
and all that you want
A decade that you want
our day has begun.

From a Women's Poster from Papua New Guinea. Reprinted in the introduction of the CWR module, How do we Liberate Ourselves, Understanding our Oppression, Working for Emancipation.

Jamaica:

Building Democratic Organizations

Hilary Nicholson
Sistren Theatre Collective, Jamaica

Sistren is a women's cultural collective. We began eleven years ago, not as an organization at first, but as a part-time grouping of women. We saw our self-imposed mandate as providing a forum for the voices of poor women in Jamaica, and later women across the Caribbean, to express their concerns to the wider society. The main form of communication we use is popular theatre, although over the years we've diversified our activities.

Our organization, we discovered, is rather different from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most NGOs seem to be made up largely of middle-class persons, very often university-trained activists or intellectuals. Our grouping was mostly working-class women, and the rationale behind our work and our membership is to create an umbrella organization which would use the experience and communication skills of working-class women. We hoped then and we still hope--we're quite determined now--that the creativity of working-class women can be harnessed to create a form of communication that is much more dynamic than the usual situation where you have a so-called skilled expert versus--very often versus--the so-called unskilled learner. And that's what we are challenging.

The make-up of the group is thirteen or fourteen working-class women, and their work is supported by three or four middle-class women, including myself. When our work began eleven years ago, it was an atmosphere of exciting social reform, when there was a democratic opening for many community groups. This political framework enabled us to function as a cultural organization. Many new and unexpected concerns were raised in those years, and many gains were made for the women's movement, gains that we have built on as we moved into the 1980s.

In these past eleven years, our work has been affected by a number of changes in our political environment. One example was the changing of the government in Jamaica, which was a reflection of a new political and economic international situation. Since then we have been less able to work within the government, partly because it was pushed into making drastic cuts in social services. This was difficult for us because our work is done for the poor. But we also found that because the government was divesting itself of responsibilities for social services, this created a space for us, if we could only brace ourselves to make use of it. The difficulty was that we, as well as other small NGOs, had limited amounts of stamina and could not fulfill all that people were asking of us. But it was our responsibility to turn ourselves into a group that could fill that space.

At that point we needed to institutionalize our organization, and build on what we had been doing in the 1970s. That often means creating a formal structure so that you can approach funding agencies for assistance. We discovered that our early relations with funders had a direct influence on the structure of our organization. Project proposals needed a lot of preparation, and writing reports and accountability involved skills that many of our working-class members had not yet developed. These skills were found more in the so-called "expert" middle-class women with a formal educational background.

So we had to look for middle-class skilled persons to work with us. This seemed to be a contradiction, since we'd set out to harness the creativity of working-class women who were already working as animators in the community.

This was contradiction number one. We were faced with trying to make sure that the expansion of the organization, and the middle-class experts coming to work with us did not change the kind of structure we wanted.

Since we were a collective, we were spending a lot of time in democratic decision-making meetings, those agonizing situations where sixteen people all have to have their voices heard until they come up with a con-

sensus! In order to make sure that everyone was heard, we had chairpersons, we spoke through the chair, and raised our hand when we wanted to speak and behaved very nicely. But this was not the way most of our members were used to behaving. Free-for-alls were another way of behaving, and they are a very popular way for to communicate.

Those bi-weekly, highly democratic decision-making meetings were called "the parliament" by the members of the co-op. And so that was another contradiction: what to adopt from outside models to make sure that we were democratic but didn't jeopardize the on-going communication process?

We also started hearing about "the executive" that sat in the back room and wrote up the agenda, and typed it, and made sure that things they wanted on the agenda were typed into it at the last minute, although ideas for the agenda had been passed around before.

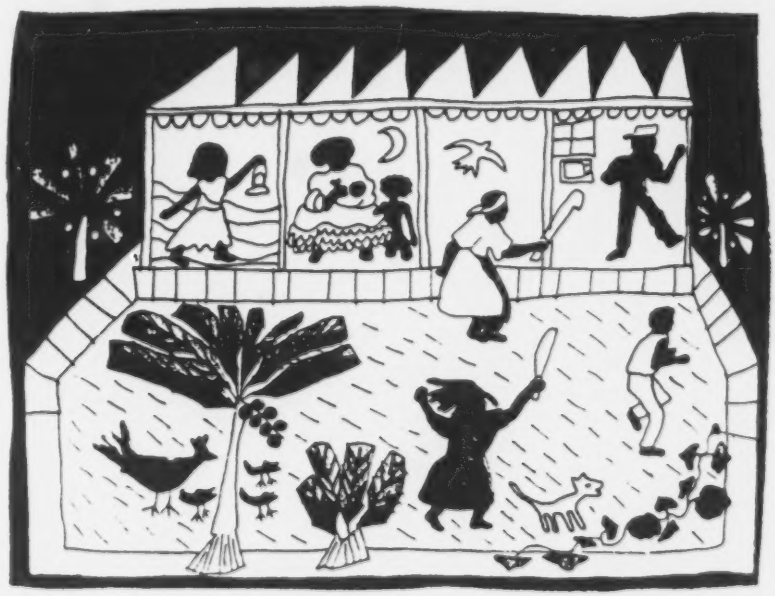
And we developed the *dem* and the *oonu* syndrome--*dem* being them, and *oonu* being you. *Dem seh oonu fi organize a workshop up on the hill at the church"* which means "they say you must organize. . ." which somehow leaves me out of it. And so this problem of diffusion of responsibility in a democratic organization had to be addressed, and still is being addressed, although we've dealt with the *dem* and the *oonu* syndrome. This contradiction made us wonder whether we were simply reproducing the relations we wanted to challenge, that we saw in the outside world, because the models that were available to start a cooperative simply were not relevant.

Well, the funders came to assist us in our expansion, and the expansion was a direct result of tremendous requests from the community to do popular theatre

workshops and theatre presentations--as well as documentation. Very early we developed a research component because we felt that it was really important to find out what women had done in our country and the region. There was very little information about this. And especially we wanted to find out about our history of resistance, which is very strong in Jamaica. We have a national heroine, a guerrilla warrior who waged warfare against the British in the 17th century. So we did a play about the kind of leadership women show at the same time as being wives and mothers.

We also discovered that we needed to build on other women's work and the work of other organizations in order to legitimize what we were doing. We were moving into a period where the media and values from the North were encouraging people to behave in a different way than in the 1970s. Confrontational activities were not the order of the day. One needed to find other ways to speak out about things that one wanted to change. We have developed a newsmagazine that helps in this.

Building on the work of others is very important in legitimizing our work. For instance, when the Free Trade Zone workers demonstrated in Jamaica last March against their excruciating conditions, we felt that it was important for us to take up the



issue of conditions and problems of work in the Free Trade Zone. We addressed it through workshops and a play, as well as the newsmagazine.

Other changes have affected the nature of our work. Whereas people would pay $40 and $50 and more to attend a beauty pageant show or a fashion show, nobody was prepared to pay $10 or $12 to come to a Sistren presentation. So, for several years now we haven't put on theatre in commercial venues in Kingston, instead we respond to the growing requests from communities to bring the theatre into rural and urban communities, as well as doing workshops with them.

Then the criticism started to come from funders that the kind of work that we were doing was not generating any income. Because we had stopped doing theatre in commercial theatres, the very people we were working with have absolutely no income to pay us. The funders were quite concerned about this problem of self-reliance, and so they put a considerable amount of pressure on us to develop an income-generating project. We developed a textile printing project--not as a main focus of our work, but to generate some income. Of course, it has not managed to support the activities of the group, because the textile project is a very small enterprise.

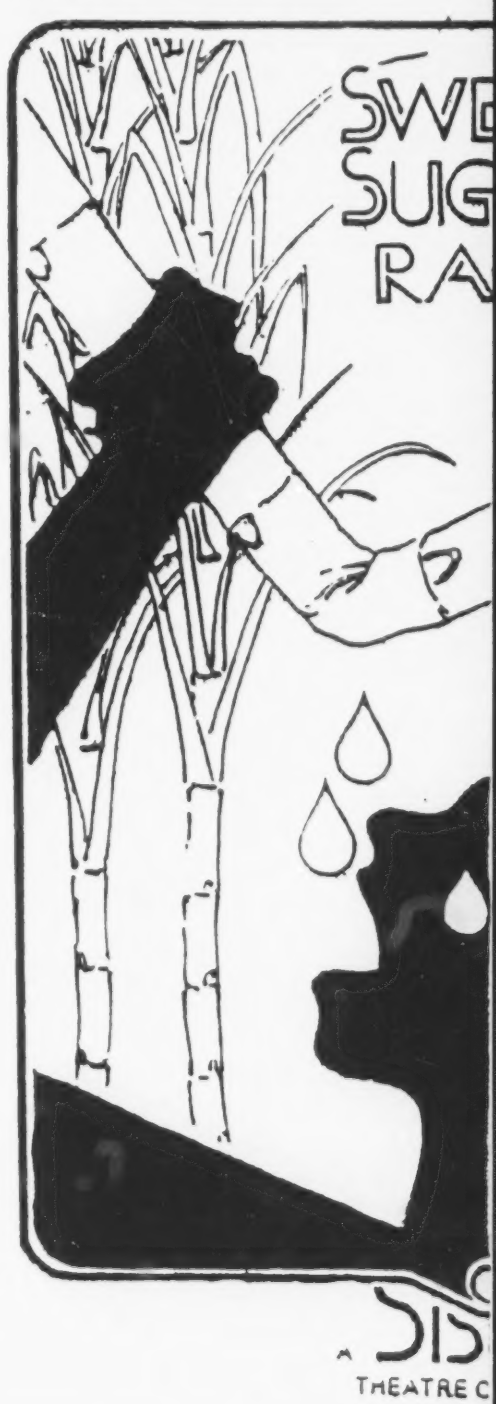
As part of our attempts to become self-reliant we made great efforts to get support from the local business sector. This worked on a project-to-project basis, but not in the long-term. It took so much time going from business to business, with letters and follow-up and phone calls. We decided that it just wasn't worth that amount of effort because those of us who were supposed to be teacher/animators were walking streets and knocking on people's doors and telling them about our wonderful projects.

We soon fell into the inevitable situation--or trap--of having to rely on external funding for our educational work. Thus we had to also explain to funders that attempts to make us self-reliant don't make sense. There's another contradiction right there. This is something that I think all of us who work in education have had to battle--education and consciousness-raising do not generate very much income. So it's hard to become self-reliant.

As we expanded, working class members of our group have been extremely motivated to maintain control of the financial budgetting and planning of the co-op. Members have been very motivated to learn these skills, which were not their primary skills. Many of the teacher/actors in Sistren have become planners, and junior accountants, and coordinators highly skilled in personal relations and communications. This meant everybody was working a double day inside Sistren, apart from the other day outside. Because you had to be a teacher/actor full time, as well as learn the co-op. But in this way you could maintain control of your own organization, which is very important.

As more of the founding members have gained skills, we've now reached a point where there is enough self-confidence that we can look outside and we employ a secretary and part-time resource people when and where we need them to help with the administrative work of the organization, without feeling that we are handing over the organization. Because we've been battling this business, we know that skills give you authority and that authority gives you power over somebody.

The double day that people were working inside of Sistren was complemented by the workday outside of Sistren. We failed to address the domestic--or private--side of people's lives. We addressed it over and over again in workshops in rural areas and in urban communities, but we failed to solve that problem in our own co-op. We discovered that, with the hours we were working, all day and well into



the night and after shows, and packing-up and meetings and rehearsals, our fairly successful enterprise was being supported by the unpaid work of the grannies, aunties, big sisters and neighbours who were doing all of the domestic work that Sistren members weren't doing when they were at Sistren at 8 o'clock and not home cooking. And so this was another contradiction we had to face--were we simply reproducing the same relations that we had been challenging all the time? Were we exploiting the very families of our own members in order to enable Sistren Theatre Collective to survive?

Recruitment can be a difficult issue, since we can be a little precious about ourselves. We are now this great big bureaucratic institution, department of this, department of that, research, documentation, film, video. And when somebody comes in from the outside to work with Sistren, aren't they going to just see us as an institution that owes them a living? Whereas those of us who've been here for a number of years and started out by washing cars and collecting bottles to get the organization off the ground, we have this tremendous commitment and it hurts to see somebody who doesn't have the same commitment earning the same money. And yet we do have this policy of equity of pay--we have very very slight discrepancies in income at Sistren.

And our policy of pay equity has some other difficulties when we need to find middle-class experts to work with us--say a communication specialist to work on our newsmagazine. We are not able to pay experts or skilled people with formal training what they would earn on the outside market. So again, this is another contradiction, we want the best to work with us but we can't attract them because we can't afford to pay them.

There are other serious difficulties that we experience in our relations with funders. There are very few agencies that understand that what we are doing is a process and not "project." We are not doing little projects.

Our first funding agency experience was not a good one. The agency had what I have always called the "adopt you, drop you, and in-between use you for PR policy." You are so wonderful, you're women and you're grassroots, and they just want to take you over and adopt you. And then when you change directions slightly--and of course as we evaluate our work we're shifting all the time--or when they're ready, they just drop you. But in between, while you're just their cup of tea and just too good to be true, you find that you are their public relations agent. You're being touted as the most wonderful project of their's and they're the cat's whiskers!

The lesson we learned from all that is don't put all your eggs in one basket. So we diversified our sources of funding, and ended up with $1,000 from here, $500 from there and $500 from there. Those of us on our finance team had this wonderful job of reporting to about 15 agencies and explaining the allocation of funds to all of them, whether it was $500 or $2000 because understandably they had a right to know how their funds were spent. This meant more administrative work, which meant more skills that we didn't have. We now look for large enough amounts so projects can go on without interruption.

We went in the direction of church organizations because we found that fewer awkward questions were asked, that no strings were attached, and tremendous confidence in the type of work we were doing was expressed by many of the church-related organizations. And there are other agencies who support women's work in the Caribbean in a highly progressive and very open way.

But the problem is that such funding is often just a one-off. Each church congregation that raises the $1000 for you--they don't always want to be hearing about Sistren. They want Sistren this time and somebody else next time. Where does that leave you?

It's really crucial for those of us working in education to wage a campaign with the donor agencies and convince them that institutional support is absolutely essential. We can't continue to be forced into a situation where we are just funded project-to-project because none of our work starts on January 15 and ends neatly on August 15, with certificates being handed out. In many donor organizations, there are people who are frequently fighting this battle themselves with someone they go to for funds. So actually it's a joint battle that we are into.

The other point is that we must not apologize for the fact that our skills are human resources, and we need money for institutional support and for salaries. People may want to offer us for example, a printing press. But we don't want a printing press. And many of us are working in contexts where video would be nice, but if there is no electricity video can't help you. The skills of the animators that we need for popular education come from within.

We also have to continue to fight for recognition of better status for the kind of work we're doing. It's cultural, and it's educational. It is not highly technological but that doesn't mean that it's low status.

What we have to do is legitimize the type of work we are doing. There still is not an understanding of what basic education means for adults. There is not an understanding of what popular theatre and non-formal work is. We must legitimize this work by supporting one another, and looking for ways to support one another, and looking for similarities in our work. And it's only when thousands of people are all doing the same thing, that it will have some legitimacy.

And the final thing is that we must do our own research and evaluation so that when funders ask us to evaluate what happened on August 15 and the certificates weren't given out, we have our own ways of knowing how our work did make a change in somebody's life. We're not going to come up with statistics and measurable things that relate to an economic form of measuring things. So we've got to suggest ways of measuring the results of our work that will satisfy those that are funding us, for example collecting lots of stories from the women that we work with. ■

From a presentation at the seminar.

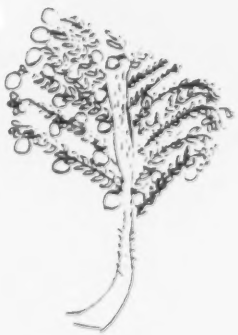
Sistren Theatre Collective
20 Kensington Crescent
Kingston 5, Jamaica

Sistren publishes a newsletter called *Sistren* which is available from the above address.

Our Next Issue

Our next issue of *Voices Rising* will appear in August/September 1988, with a focus on issues around women and literacy, particularly the experiences of women in the US and Southern Africa. If you wish to share your thoughts about doing literacy work with women, raise issues or share information about resources, we really welcome your submissions--the deadline for the next issue is July 1, 1988.

Also, please write to us if you have any thoughts on this issue of *Voices Rising*. What is your response to the questions raised at the seminar? We'd love to hear from you.



Lionheart Gal, Sistren

Lebanon:

Supporting Women's Daily Struggles

In the last Voices Rising *we announced the establishment of a new fund in the memory of Nabila Breir, a friend and comrade of the Women's Program. Nabila, a Palestinian, was a deeply committed activist and educator who worked in Beirut. She was brutally murdered in December 1986. The Nabila Breir Fund will promote links between women educators in Arabic-speaking countries and other parts of the world.*

This year our modest fund honoured the Najdeh Association. Najdeh works to provide support to Palestinian women in the cities and refugee camps in Lebanon. Najdeh's coordinator, Leila Zakareya, accepted the award on behalf of the association.

Leila's presence--along with that of other women from Arabic-speaking countries who attended--greatly increased our awareness of the situation of women in the Arab world. We are committed to working towards more ongoing contact, support and exchange between women there and in other parts of the world. One important first step is to learn more about their reality and the work they are doing.

The following is a Women's Program interview with Leila conducted by Marie Lorenzo.

How did Najdeh begin?

Najdeh started in 1976. At the beginning of the civil war in Lebanon, a Palestinian camp located in a fascist area within Beirut went under seige for around four months and finally fell. The men and boys over a certain age were killed, and the remaining population was displaced to another town, south of Beirut.

There were widows and families living in the camps who had no income. The women had been working in an industrial area nearby. The new town was a city with nothing in it, just a bunch of houses and rubble. It had been destroyed by battles in the civil war. There was nothing for the women to do. There were no jobs.

So a group of Palestinian, Lebanese and some foreign women got together to do something for women in the camps. A project was needed which would give them work, greater self reliance, and would at the same time be a link to their culture. For several decades these Palestinian workers had been losing their link with their cultural heritage. Embroidery for instance. The women in this camp had lost that link because they were workers and didn't have time to spend doing embroidery. Any project would also have to provide complementary nurseries and kindergartens so the women could be freed from the burden of caring for their children.

This is how Najdeh started. That's where the idea for organizing an embroidery project, which is the heart of Najdeh, came from. I'm sure a lot of you will say, oh embroidery, that's just a traditional project you give to women, like sewing and others. But for us it is very important.

How long has Najdeh been in operation?

In February of this year we marked our tenth anniversary. But we didn't celebrate it; actu-

ally we forgot it. And the reason we forgot it was because we were going through the kinds of turmoil that are so usual in this country. At least a third of our staff and most of our members were blockaded inside the besieged camps. It had been like that for at least six months. And those of us who were outside and were staying in Beirut were in the throes of a street battle, which is also a regular happening in Beirut, where right-wing militias fight each other at the expense of the civilian population. For days one has to hide in staircases and shelters.

Once this state was over and we got to our offices, our anniversary had gone by, and we still hadn't remembered it. It took a while. And it was right after the siege of Shatila was partially lifted, and in the euphoria of going inside the camp and seeing Najdeh members again, working with people, being friends again, and being so excited that after so many months and living through such a battle which one hadn't imagined would end . . . and then to find friends were still there. We suddenly remembered that it was our tenth anniversary.

The only thing that seemed appropriate to do at that time was to assess of what we had done and to see whether we had made some achievements in ten years. And we found we had.

What were they?

One important achievement was that we had never lost the vision that we were a popular movement, that we had to rely on the women from the very areas where we wanted to work, women from the camps and from the surrounding neighbourhoods. People who had a will to survive, who had the will to respond to the kinds of attacks they are subjected to, people who wanted

to improve their living conditions, and who wanted to defend whatever they had. This is the tremendous achievement. If we had lost this connection we would have just been an institution, a shell without any content.

We felt it was an achievement simply to have survived. We had survived the Israeli invasion which caused a vast amount of destruction and dispersal. We were able to do this because women in the camps, women in Shatila had the strength to reorganize, to find ways and means to start human life again on various levels. And we also survived the camp wars. We had survived through situations that in fact we hadn't imagined we would. I'll tell you one example of how we were able to achieve this. In the southern most part of Lebanon, where we have our embroidery workshop, the militias that were attacking the camp and were coming inside the camps started arresting women when they found pieces of embroidery on them. They didn't find arms; they didn't look for arms. They arrested them as soon as they found somebody with a piece of embroidery. This could have been the death of our organization. But the amazing thing was that the women inside the camps started hiding pieces of embroidery, thread and canvas on them and going around in order to distribute work. They didn't wait for things to improve to resume their activities.

There was another achievement which we thought was important. As you all know, as a result of the Israeli invasion and the Israeli occupation, Lebanon has suffered an increasing disintegration of the society on a sectarian basis. And this disintegration has affected many institutions, not because they really want to succumb to this atmosphere or to the kind of

pressures that are imposed on them, but because sometimes they have no choice. And we found that as an institution we have been able to preserve our non-sectarian values and our inter-communal character. We still have Lebanese, Muslims, Christians and Palestinians working in the organization. We had not accepted any compromise, despite the fears. And there are huge fears--people in Lebanon can be threatened just because they belong to a certain nationality, and can lose their lives overnight. They don't go to court; they don't get arrested--it just may happen in one second.

We were committed to this and we had held on to it and preserved it. And I think we also proved to other people that it could be done and that it could be done without too much compromise--in fact with no compromise at all.

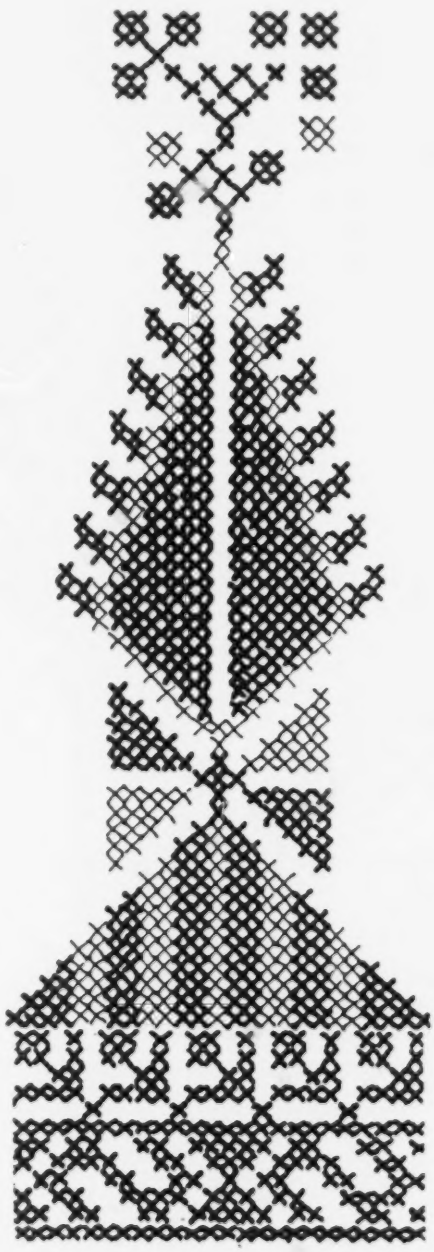
A third achievement was something that happened despite ourselves, and that was our growth. We grew tremendously in the last four years, from a small organization we grew from 300 women to 800 women, and we achieved self-sufficiency. And that's quite miraculous.

But all the achievements doesn't mean we haven't had problems.

Going back to when Najdeh began, were the women who started the group from political organizations?

No, they envisaged a group which would not be political in the sense that it would not have a specific political direction. Its objective would be broader, working with women. There was no other organization with that kind of mandate. There were and are Palestinian women's unions which mobilize women in the political struggle, but very few have the capacity or the time to think of the development of women's capacities as workers.

Most, if not all the women were politically active in women's unions or women's mass movements that basically dealt with resisting the military attacks on the camps. They were part of the liberation struggle. But these mass movements couldn't give women support in terms of daily survival, being there and caring for them on that level.



How do you see providing women with a means of being self-reliant as linked to the political struggle?

It's a very important part. You can't expect women to continue in the political struggle if on the day-to-day basis they are not able to solve their problems. You can't expect them to do that; it's too much to ask of people. They require support, from themselves. I'm not talking about a Najdeh that is coming from outside and supporting. Women need to support themselves and each other.

At the same time they belong to mass unions, and so can combine the two sides of the political struggle. Ours is a political struggle but from a different perspective.

How is Najdeh internally structured?

Najdeh is structured very democratically, so that none of the intellectual women, the bourgeois middle-class women, can impose their viewpoints in an autocratic, hierarchical, patriarchal manner. It's not possible, because everyone participates in the decision-making, in elaborating what we ought to do and in seeing where we make mistakes. And of course we make a lot.

Let's discuss the embroidery. You talked about its traditional value for the women.

Embroidery is an integral part of Palestinian culture. It's part of our duty as Palestinian women and part of women's tradition. Traditionally in every village women have embroidered their own gowns and have made cushions for their houses. In doing so they have helped to preserve part of our national identity. Palestinian embroidery is very rich in meaning; they serve as our history books.

Every village, town and region has its own motifs, its own colours, its own designs, its own relationships. They are quite intricate, not at all simple.

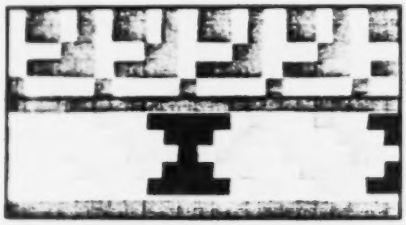
When we develop the embroidery pieces we just don't develop a shape. We sit together and all participate in developing the designs. The women don't work in the workshops. We distribute the pieces of embroidery in workshops and it's up to each woman to finish it whenever she sees fit. We don't pressure her. The women are totally free to take as much time as they need in doing the work. It's not like we've established a factory with a time limit. We love it if they can do it fast, but we don't want to push them. They meet together once a week in smaller groups, because there usually are about 120. They bring their work to the workshops to discuss their problems--the colour combinations or some other issue. And when it's done then they hand it back.

They get paid by the stitch?

Yes. Why by the stitch--because the value is really in the work, in how much work is done. We also pay related to the number of colours. Sometimes there's a piece that could have twelve colours which is far more difficult than a monochrome thing.

Do many women want to work with Najdeh?

Yes, right now lots of women want to do this work, because Palestinian women--Palestinians in general in Lebanon--don't have the right to work. You cannot get employment outside the camp without having a work permit. Obviously Palestinians don't get work permits, especially the working people. Very very few can get work permits. For women one of the only choices is to become domestics in the cities. They become either servants or agricultural workers on a day wage basis.



There aren't many options. For many women, doing the embroidery is far easier and more dignified than going out and becoming a domestic in a Lebanese home. So there is a lot of demand. Najdeh grew from 300 in 1984 to 800 and 1,000 now. It doesn't really say that the work we are doing is so great but that the need is so great for work, and work with dignity.

I want to tell you about something else. Now more and more it's the whole family--the eldest daughters and also the men--that participate in doing the embroidery. It's a new phenomena. There are some families where the men can't leave. They are restricted to the house for security reasons. They could be caught or kidnapped and killed. So, many of them--also because they are jobless--are now participating in the embroidering. I find that beautiful, I really do.

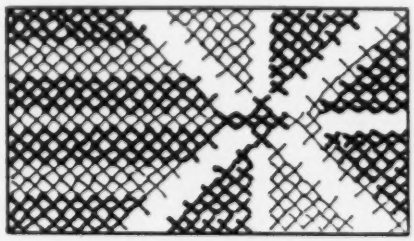
It wasn't a man's job?

No, this is a traditional society, a patriarchal society. Nobody would think of it. I'm not going to try and embelish this change but I do think that many men are proud to say that they are doing this.

Are the women teaching the men?

Yes. It's a quite interesting phenomena. I think it's a reflection of the fact that Palestinian women, in the years of being involved in the civil war and then after the Israeli invasion, and with the very important role they are taking in the society--are really the mainstay. I'm not exaggerating. And I'm sure it's everywhere, all over the world, how women have to almost take over everything. They have a big responsibility. And they have to make decisions.

The respect for women is quite big, and I don't think they'll give it up any more. They realize after all these years, for example, that women working is not a problem. And we see other changes. In our kind of society where women were required to get married early--this is now breaking down. Of course, the needs of the life, of the war, impose this. But also there is no more controversy about the fact that a Palestinian woman wants to work and do things, leave her home and find places to put her children, find others to help her--either the extended family or some kindergarten, and pay in order to go out and work.



These are things that are not questioned in the Palestinian community in Lebanon. However within the Lebanese communities it's quite different. Women are more commonly relegated to the home. When they do work it is preferred that they do a home-based project or something that

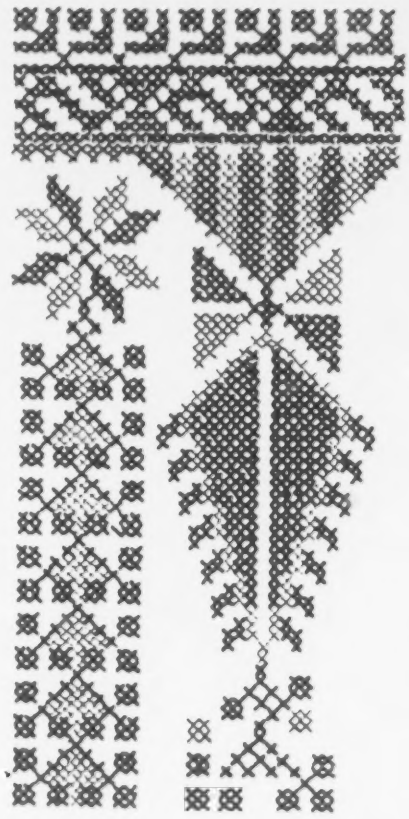
is related purely to women. I think it's really true that complete involvement of women in the struggle liberates their situation far faster than a situation where you don't have this. It's a very big contrast.

Does Najdeh take on selling the embroidery?

Yes. First though we have to finish them, to sew them. The embroidery is done on a piece of cloth which is not sewn up and from there becomes a shirt, a cushion, a dress--whatever. We have a sewing factory--we call it factory but it is really a sewing workshop.

We market the finished pieces locally and also abroad. Our marketing committee used to be headed by one of the founders of Najdeh, an Italian woman who was terribly dedicated to the Palestinian cause and to Palestinian women in particular, but now the women from the camp are now the ones that do the marketing. They have to learn languages; they have to develop their own skills, learn bookkeeping--all this sort of stuff. They are in control.

We have two shops inside Beirut, and we also sell in Europe and North America and a little in some Arab countries. We don't sell much in the Arab world--there is a tendency now--which we are trying to stop--for wholesalers to come to our shop in an underhanded way, buy our materials and then they sell them at profits. We sell through solidarity committees or support groups--little nucleus of support groups who know Najdeh. We call our sales "militant" sales.



We have a much bigger demand than we have production. Even if there were commercial outlets we couldn't be sure that we could give them the quantities they would want because of the way we work with the women.

You mentioned earlier that although there have been achievements over the ten years these haven't been easily won. What are some of the problems the group has faced?

One of the worst problems that we have had, and which we are still coping with, is that now we find ourselves, along with many other groups, working increasingly in what is called emergency work. In the final analysis it's distributing handouts to people. There are so many catastrophes, and people are in such bad situations. One has to help them. One has to at least distribute food, one has to at least to give out beds and clothing for children. This is something that ideologically we don't like but which we have to do.

We don't see our emergency work, particularly now in the last few years, as just emergency work; we think it is a political responsibility. The camp wars are an attempt to disperse the Palestinian people in Lebanon. We hate that thought and feel we have to put in every effort to allow people to remain inside the camps giving them the moral support and making sure the question of survival is not isolated from the regional questions, from the struggle of Palestinians for their homeland. All these things are interlinked and we feel that as an organization which has a relative freedom of movement inside Lebanon despite the militias, that this is something we must do, even at the expense of certain standards we have. And we try to limit it as much as possible.

The other problem which we face which directly affects our activities is the terrible economic situation. You must know that the economy since the Israeli invasion and occupation is slowly disintegrating. Four or three years ago the US$1 was worth 3 1/2 Lebanese pounds; today it's worth 800 Lebanese pounds. With today's minimum wage you can only buy three cans of milk

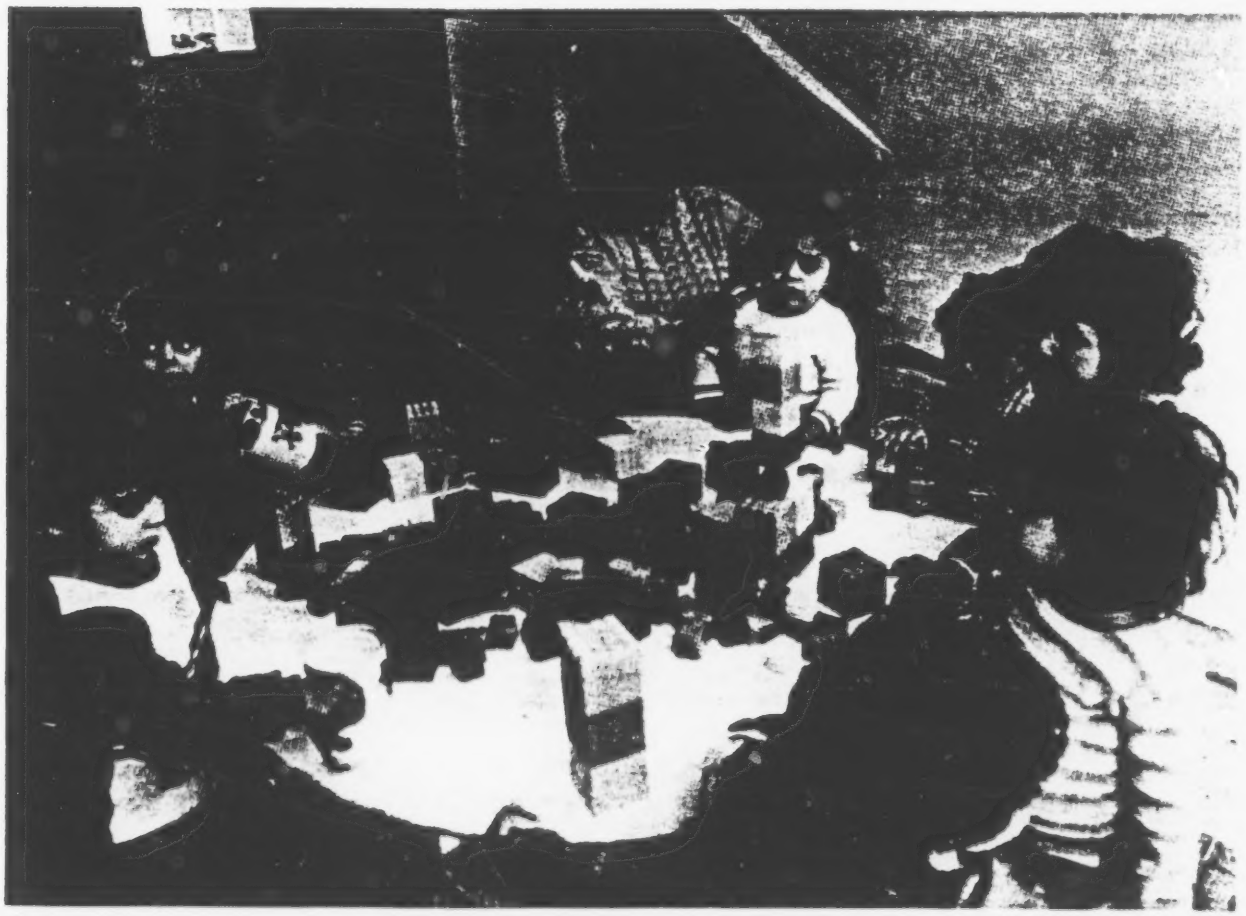
per month, and that's it. And it's a problem not only for Palestinians. This new impoverishment of the population creates many challenges for organizations like ours.

We also have problems with our members, and the huge psychological pains that they are going through--the fact that most of the workers are living in areas that are in constant war. They are suffering. They are losing homes, they are losing relatives and yet they have to work. We force them to work. We don't give them time to rest because we cannot afford it. And this is really showing. It's a huge problem and we haven't found a solution yet.

Just a general question--about the situation for Palestine now?

Something very important happened this year. As you know the PLO was deeply divided after it left Lebanon in 1982. This made it easy to attack the Palestinian movement and weakened the struggle and the Palestinian people politically. This was manifested in what is now called the "camp wars." At the same time there were the seiges and blockades, and all the excesses--which break all principles of human rights--that have been directed against Palestinian people in Lebanon. And in the West Bank the Israeli occupier began to use an iron fist policy even more strongly against the Palestinian population.

There were lots of different solutions to the Palestinian problem being proposed from outside, and this was weakening the struggle and taking us back. But after a long internal political struggle these divisions were resolved. And then when the Palestine National Council met this year in April, and united--that was really an amazing and wonderful step. Everybody celebrated in the camps, even in the besieged camps. It transformed our whole vision. Imagine that we were able to re-unite the movement within three or four years. That's not always easy to do and we were happy that we



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could do it in three years.

So now the PLO is back as a force. They are recognized regionally and internationally as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian program of an independent state based on United Nations resolutions is now at the forefront. This is really a step forward. We're all very optimistic that we'll see our nation soon. I'm sure I'll see it before my death. I'm absolutely certain.

And the sympathy you see in people. There is no way to compare people's awareness now to ten or fifteen or twenty years ago. The solidarity and awareness that exists is tremendous. Before, if I had been in a conference like this somebody would have come up to tell me, "You Palestinians, you hate Jews; you want to eliminate Jews." Not one person in this conference has asked me that. They know that that's not what we think. So I can't help being optimistic; things are changing.

Association Najdeh
P.O. Box 113-6099
Beirut, LEBANON

Challenges for a Feminist Popular Education: A Resource Kit

The following articles were included in the Resource Kit for the Montreal seminar:

Feminism and Popular Education: A Critical but Necessary Relationship by Magaly Pineda, Centro de Investigación Para Accion Feminina (CIPAF), Dominican Republic, 1986, 3pp.

Feminist Education and Research: Towards Strengthening Basic Women's Organization by Carol Anonuevo, Center for Women's Resources (CWR), Philippines, 1987, 2pp.

African Women's Network: An Interview with Thelma Awori, convenor of the women's network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE), Kenya, 1987, 4pp.

Women and Housing: A Training Program by Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), Bombay, India, 1987, 7pp.

The Women's Program: Our History, 1987, 4pp.

They are available in French, English and Spanish as a set ($5.00) or individually ($1.00 each). Free to Third World women's and popular education groups. If you would like copies write the Women's Program, 309-229 College St., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA, M5T 1R4

Suggested Readings:

Femmes arabes et femmes d'ici: acquis et défis des années 80 (Arab Women and Women Here: Achievements and Challenges of the 80's), Centre d'Etudes Arabes pour le Développement, 1987, 26pp. (French) Focusses on situation of women in Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon. Prepared for a one day seminar organized by CEAD in November 1987 on the reality of women's lives in the Arab world and in Quebec. Available from: CEAD, 3738 St. Dominique, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2X 2X9.

Les femmes dans le monde arabe (Women in the Arab World), Centre d'Etudes Arabes pour le Developpement, Paper No.3, 1985, 69pp. (French) This collection of short papers attempts to redress a narrow understanding of the situation of Arab women through a look at their particular social, economic, political and historical context. Available from: CEAD, 3738 St. Dominique, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2X 2X9.

Reflections on the Palestinian Women's Movement in the Occupied Territories by Rita Giacaman, 1987. (English) Cost: $1.00. Available from: CEAD, 3738 St. Dominique, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2X 2X9

Women & Politics, MERIP Middle East Report, No.138, Jan-Feb 1986, 48pp. (English) Individual subscription $18US. Available from: MERIP, Room 518, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, USA.

Reaching Women:

An Informal Workshop on "Media"

During the seminar, some of the most interesting discussions took place at the "informal workshops", which were organized by the participants themselves on issues important in their work. These are reports on two of those workshops.

Linzi Manicom,
Women's Program

During the Montreal seminar, a number of us got together informally to share ideas about "women and media." It quickly became apparent that we were defining "media" broadly, and were raising more general questions about appropriate and effective forms of communication with women.

Discussion began with an assessment of printed media in our education and mobilizing work. When Wendy from Canada raised the issue of the expense of producing and printing education materials, there was a round of consensual nods. Hilary mentioned the cost of photocopying in Jamaica and we gasped. But those costs have different sources: in the Third World scarce and expensive imported technology make some aspects of the printing process exorbitant. In the industrialized countries it is the labour that is more costly. Printed materials have to be almost fully subsidized to be affordable for working people in many places.

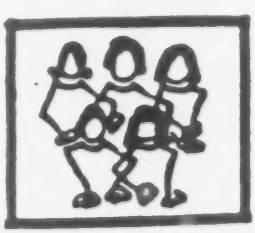
There are other limitations to the printed form. There is the question of what language to use in print. The language many women use in everyday speech is not always the language they can, or are learning to, read and write. For example, in Jamaica, women with a few years of schooling find the patois used in everyday speech very difficult to read when it is written down. Yet English is not the language of the people, and women with limited literacy find its complex spelling and structure really hard to follow.

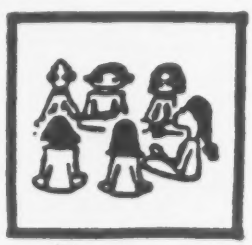
Maria from Nicaragua told of a monthly newspaper where the reporters are workers who write of issues arising from their lives. And the newspapers are printed on cheap paper so as to be affordable to the workers. But the problem of newspapers, as others pointed out, is that they allow only one-way communication. For feedback and developing ideas, there needs to be a way of interacting, explaining, answering questions.

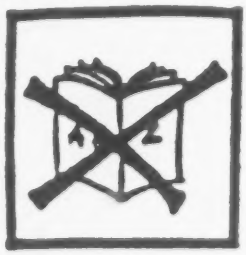
For many women from the popular classes around the world, reading and engaging with print is not something that is perceived as practical in terms of their lives or necessarily a desirable activity. For women in rural Tanzania, for instance, not only are women too tired at the end of the day, but there is no adequate lighting for reading. Amongst some workers in Asia, there is a somewhat negative attitude towards reading which is seen as the activity of "intellectuals" and as such, exclusive. In such situations there have to be media or forms of communication other than printed words for a productive education process.

Patsy and Asseny from Tanzania stressed the importance of face to face discussion. Canner, from Namibia, agreed. In her experience, group discussion amongst women is the most effective form for learning. SWAPO (the Namibian liberation movement) does use printed materials in its literacy program, but always in conjunction with discussion. The materials are also used in a cooperative way with the more advanced helping those with less reading skills. A noticeboard as a form for disseminating daily news has also proved effective. The problems SWAPO encounters involve a lack of teaching and learning materials and a lack funds.

A number of us affirmed the







effectiveness of cartoon pamphlets and books. Judging by the array of popular education materials on display during the seminar, the cartoon is one form that many women educators are using in their work with women. Cartoon pamphlets are often used in mobilizing workers in the Asian Free Trade Zones. The cartoon scenes depicted the issues and debates surrounding the everyday concerns and struggles of workers. These have been distributed on picket lines to convey information about that particular struggle and about workers' actions in areas, to build up a sense of solidarity. The idea is that those who read the cartoons will identify with the characters represented and the issues they are talking about, prompting reaction and discussion.

But even cartoons require some reading skills, time and conditions for reading, and a positive attitude and familiarity with printed media and the practice of reading. What are the alternative forms of reaching women?

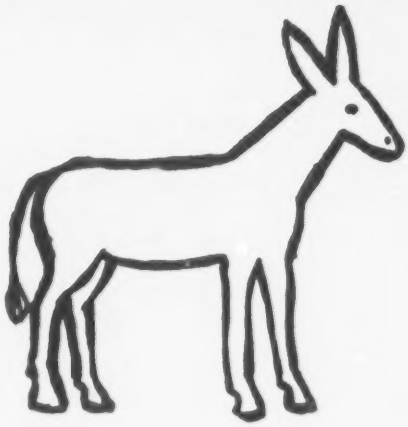
Several women emphasized the importance of mobilizing women through forms with which they are familiar and comfortable. Fatma from Tanzania argued that print is not reaching women, and that many of the forms through which we have tried to mobilize women--such as printed information and public meetings--are male forms, and are not forms with which many women feel at ease or which mean much to them. Activists in Tanzania are now trying to use the forms that are already part of women's lives, particularly those cultural forms in which women traditionally participate--such as dances and celebrations. Fatma also said that the shift from print to audio-visual, where women can see and hear themselves, has proved very powerful in helping women to look reflectively at their lives.

Lucia said that women in Belize don't have time to come to workshops and meetings, so organizers have to go to where the women are working and join with women in their activities--such as cooking, or producing food. There, workshops can be conducted by cooperating with the women in their daily lives.

Hilary mentioned the popularity of call-in radio shows amongst urban poor women who don't read--particularly domestic workers--in Jamaica. Women can call in during their workdays to raise issues of significance to them. The radio is generally an important medium for education in this type of situation, even though it doesn't promote too much dialogue and exchange.

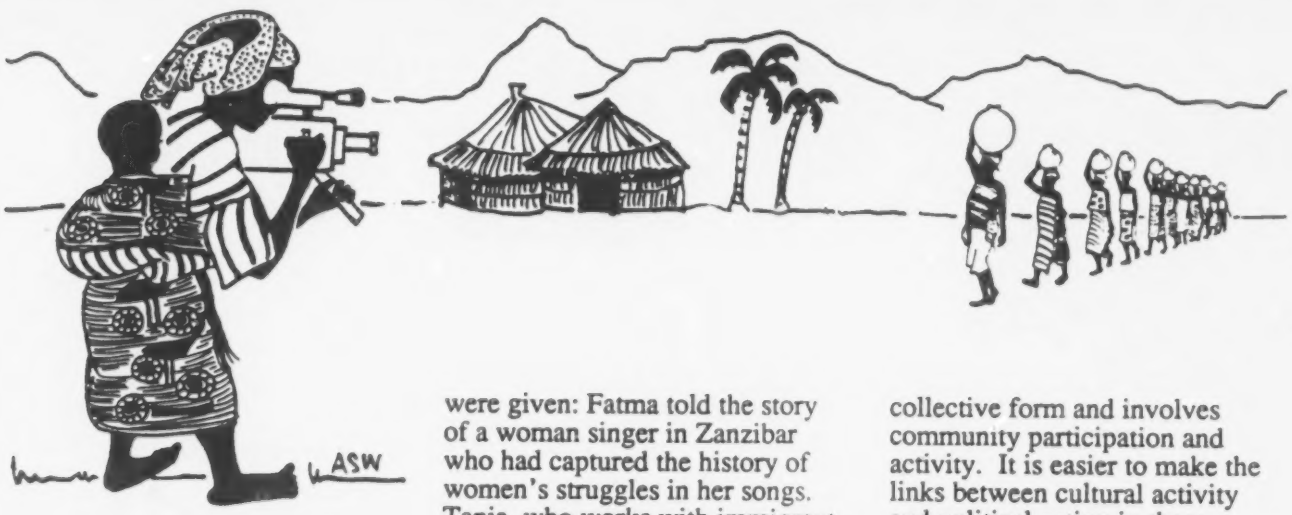
Rosanna, from the Dominican Republic, stressed that finding out about the people should be the first aim, but in such a way that the community's knowledge about itself is portrayed. She mentioned various ways of exploring this--group poetry, social drama and theatre. We shared ideas and experiences about different practices which prompt women to express and develop their understandings of their lives.

Drawing was an important form of non-verbal communication that several of us had used creatively in our education work.



Often women can express things through drawing which they can't or are too fearful to actually put into words. Rosanna told a story of a drawing workshop in which woman had drawn a donkey as representing her feelings about her life and herself. Lean mentioned the drawing of life stories on long sheets of paper and a project in which workers learned to draw and produce their own paper transparencies to use as educational materials.

Drawing is also an effective education device in the hands of a skilled artist or cartoonist, particularly when working with an animator in a workshop format. The animator asks questions, prompting the women to recall and describe their life experiences. The cartoonist depicts these experiences graphically, "saving" the scenes and ideas, in this way allowing



women to stand back from and reflect upon their lives as represented on the paper. Connections can then be made between immediate and personal experiences, and the broader social issues.

Clearly there is no one medium of communication that is effective for all women in all situations. The choice of form depends on the constituency of women, the objectives of the education project, the resources and capacities--both of the organizers and of women involved. It was also pointed out that in thinking through some of the issues and the value of the print form it was important to distinguish between materials and media intended for teachers, trainers or organizers, and those materials for the use of the women learners themselves.

It was at this point that Fatma articulated the main underlying question: how to move from an understanding of our situations of oppression to organized action to change those conditions.

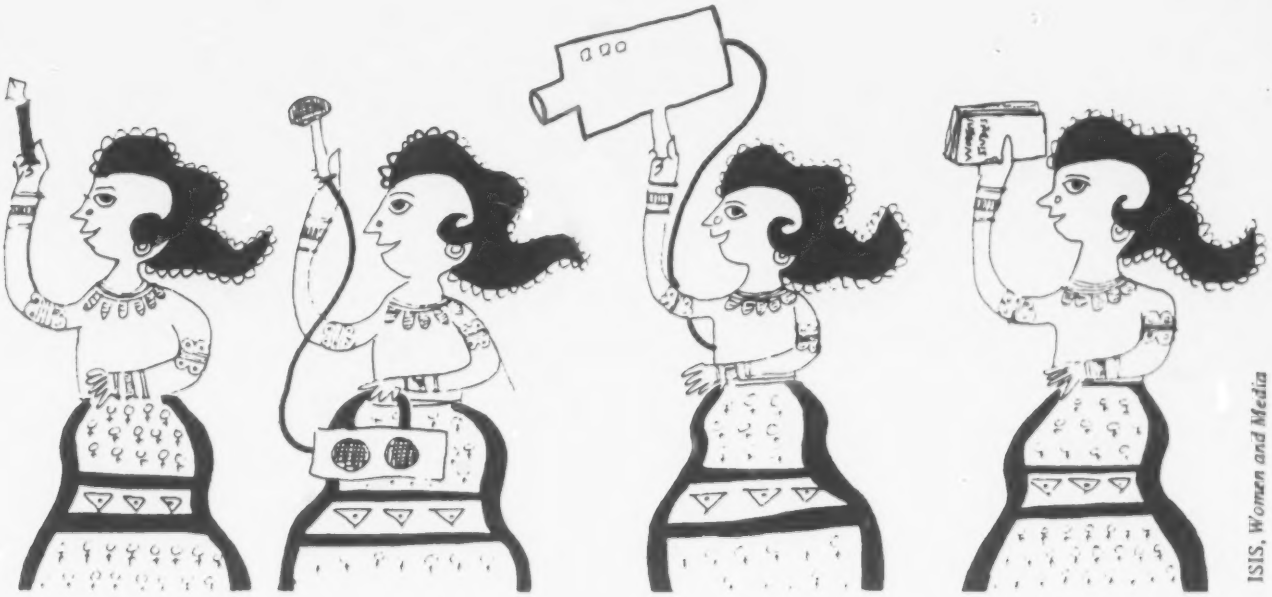
Reclaiming the history of women's political struggles was seen as very important in promoting political action. A number of different examples were given: Fatma told the story of a woman singer in Zanzibar who had captured the history of women's struggles in her songs. Tania, who works with immigrant women in Canada, related the recording of the history of political actions by immigrant women in the form of a web. This graphic picture conveyed to immigrant women a sense of the interconnectedness, the strength and extent of the women's political actions. And this was particularly empowering for women who feel disconnected and displaced from their own history. Hilary noted that we are often cut off from our own past, sometimes even more so if we have acquired skills and formal education because we lose access to the oral forms of our history. She talked about various ways of moving women to action--using role play, acting, drama, to rehearse situations that women want to act out in real life.

The discussion about the potential educational value of popular cultural forms prompted Rachel to contrast the very limited definition of culture in the United States with the broader vision being shared by women in the room. Within the feminist movement in the US there has been some reclaiming of a more popular women's culture and of alternative forms of political action, but the surface has only been scratched. Others added that in non-industrialized societies, culture has a more collective form and involves community participation and activity. It is easier to make the links between cultural activity and political action in these contexts than in the more individualized and performance-oriented culture of industrial-capitalist societies. It was argued that it was important to see women's actions and culture as political, and for women to have their actions valued in this way. In this context, Maria from Nicaragua gave the example of 50,000 women protesting in front of the US embassy in September 1987.

The discussion turned to the mass and mainstream media. It was suggested that, as feminists, we should be working more to combat the negative influence of the mainstream media which represents our cultural and political action, picking up on certain

themes and issues and turning them against us. There is a tendency amongst Western feminists to concentrate energies on the alternative feminist media, leaving the mainstream media unchallenged. This issue is pertinent not only to women in industrialized countries: in Third World countries, the mass media, though less sophisticated, are a very powerful means of communication. In Tanzania, we were told, women working in the media were organizing together precisely to deal with questions of representation of gender in the media and to defend themselves collectively against the negative reactions they encounter when they raise women's issues publically.

We left the meeting with a heightened sense of the tremendous creativity of women activists from many different situations, working to develop media of communication appropriate to women's lives, and exploring ways of reaching women. ■



ISIS, *Women and Media*

Suggested Readings:

Women and Media: Analysis, Alternatives and Action, ISIS Journal, December 1984, 132pp. (English and Spanish) With articles drawn from Asian and Pacific regions, this issue focusses on analyzing the ways in which women are portrayed in different media and efforts by women to protest against negative portrayals and to create alternatives. Available from: ISIS, Via San Saba 5, 00153, Rome, Italy.

Powerful Images: A Woman's Guide to Audiovisual Resources, ISIS, 1986, 210pp. (English and Spanish) Includes articles and interviews sharing the experiences of Third world women's groups in making and using audiovisuals, and an annotated catalogue of more than 600 women's audiovisuals in all media with distributors addresses. Available from: ISIS, Via San Saba 5, 00153, Rome, Italy.

Media: Getting to Women, Spring 1985 issue of Connexions: an International Women's Quarterly. Articles drawn from many different regions examine issues and projects in alternative women's media. Available from: Connexions, Peoples Translation Service, 4228 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA, 94609, U.S.A.

Strengthening Grassroots Solidarity: An Informal Workshop

Linzi Manicom,
Women's Program

How to build and strengthen international solidarity between women at the grassroots level? About 20 of us came together on the last morning of the seminar to discuss this question.

Our first task was to clarify our political orientation with regard to the question. So the group collectively formulated the following principles: firstly, " We share a commitment to practical action against any systems that exploit women and their communities," and secondly, " We share a political commitment to working with grassroots women and linking with "grassroots" movements around the world."

As a goal of the workshop, and as a longer term objective, we agreed "We need to work toward a common analysis of the link between the daily experiences of women and the international structures of oppression." We also shared the assumption that international solidarity should be a daily dimension of our work.

Laying out our political perspective was important. Putting it into practice is, we all agreed, far more challenging and complex. Just how do we maintain a solidarity perspective in our everyday practice--whether education work or organizing? How can we make the links between women's daily lives and their experience of oppression--in very different sets of circumstances? There are no simple answers to such questions--and certainly none that are universally applicable. The different directions which the discussion took seemed to indicate that the challenge of developing international grassroots solidarity needs to be taken up on a number of fronts.

A major topic of discussion was the sharing of information, for this is of course the basis for solidarity. We need to share information about the struggles and conditions of women in different parts of the world. And, we need to expose the exploitative links between industrial and Third World countries.

Some participants felt that it is not so much the production of information that is the weak link, for there is in fact of lot of information available. The problem lies more in the failure to distribute such information to grassroots women's groups. We need therefore to aim at building a communication infrastructure that is more effective in reaching local women's groups. The means and resources to do this are not readily available and will have to be found. But there are existing regional and international networks and informational vehicles, and we should work to make much better use of these.

This raised the question of how we use the information. We have to find more effective ways of ensuring that the information is effectively communicated and creatively interpreted to form a basis for mobilization. That means giving more thought to developing appropriate forms of information and communication for different constituencies. We need to explore innovative ways of presenting information and discussing the issues relating to women in other situations and struggles.

In the second half of the workshop the discussion shifted from information exchange and

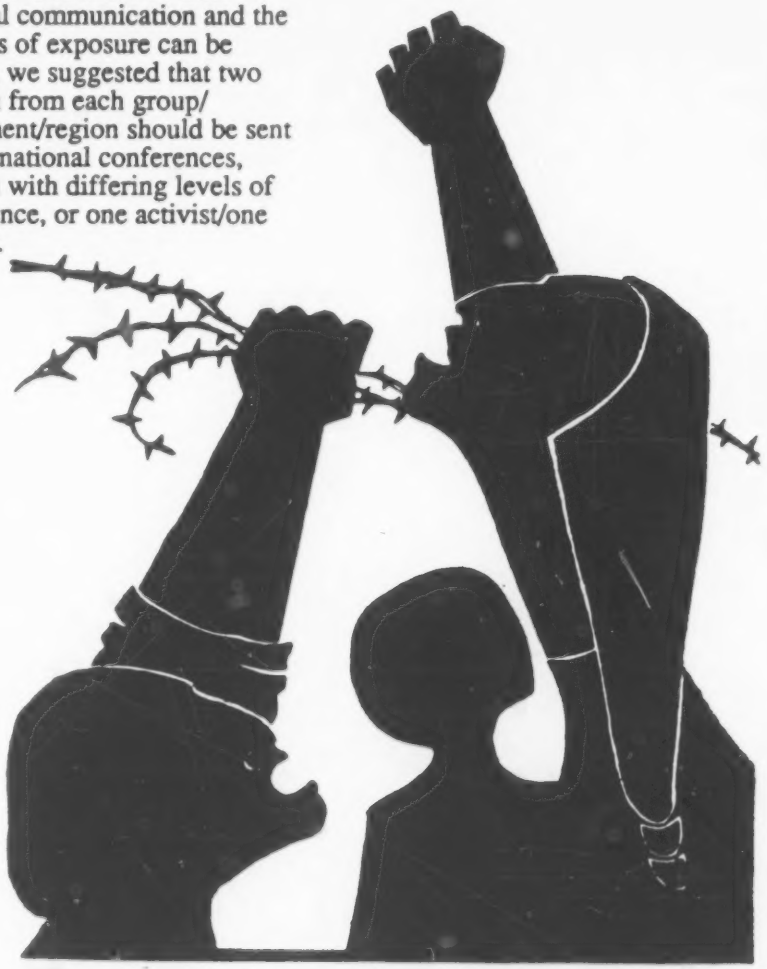
use to the question of how to make links between women's struggles at grassroots levels.

All participants agreed that if we are going to develop international links we have to learn to be very sensitive to the different cultural and political contexts of womens' struggles. We have to avoid making assumptions about the political meaning of issues and aspects of culture that we encounter in other countries. Rather, if we explore the different social meanings and the ways issues are taken up in various places we can come to understand more about women's struggles globally, including our own. One example is the question of violence. In some countries domestic violence is the major focus of women's organizing, while in other contexts women are adopting what might be seen as a "violent" strategy of armed struggle, for national liberation.

There is, it was agreed, a need for a clearer theoretical understanding of the international connections between women. But in making grassroots links among women, the more meaningful point of departure is a focus on the immediate conditions of women's lives. What are the day-to-day issues confronting women in the popular classes in other countries? How do these compare with the problems faced by women in our own situations? On this basis we can begin to see that oppression is the common theme that connects women in different parts of the world, and explore the different forms it takes. Starting from the immediate issues and establishing the points of identification, we can start to look at the different (and similar) sources of oppression, moving from local social structures to embrace an understanding of imperialism and international capitalism. One of the group members described the work that she had been involved in, showing the ease with which women on welfare in Canada could relate to the issues that women in South Africa and in Nicaragua are confronting--issues such as providing food for children and organizing shelter.

The discussion then returned to the experience of the seminar. International gatherings that allow for real personal contact and exposure were seen as important means of developing solidarity. We concluded with a number of proposals for strengthening future meetings: When women attend international conferences, provision should be made for them to meet with local grassroots women's groups for discussions and sharing. In order to ensure that skills of international communication and the benefits of exposure can be shared, we suggested that two women from each group/ movement/region should be sent to international conferences, women with differing levels of experience, or one activist/one worker.

The groups felt that international women's events should be organized so that it is possible for grassroots women to participate. This means taking account of family responsibilities and communication and language, as well as perhaps compensating for wages lost during time away from work. It also means that more conscious use needs to be made of popular education techniques to break through the barriers of language. Finally, we suggested that in the planning of events efforts must be made to reach out to new organizations and new women. ■



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Looking Back on the Seminar

Pat Keel
National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, United Kingdom

Scanning the participants list and smiling over photographs, I am struck again by the wonderful opportunity we all had to come together from so many different countries to share our experiences and perspectives. In the midst of those days it was not easy to keep track of all that was being shared among us. Now, in retrospect, I see a little more clearly the larger meanings the seminar had for me.

Most significant was the persistent gap between perspectives emerging from the so-called "developing" countries, and those from the "developed" world. It seemed to me that in the latter, vision focuses mainly on "feminist" issues--the fight for equal pay and status, and against sexism in language and culture--and of course the role of women's education in these issues. The messages from the other countries indicated that their focus was substantially different.

Women from countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America were saying something like this: "Look sisters, if that is what feminism is about, we cannot identify with it, while we have more pressing issues on our agendas." Those pressing issues include poverty (to a degree often incomprehensible in better-off countries), military conflict (again something largely outside the experience of first world women), and economic and political domination, (most often by the first world).

In the face of such issues of primary national concern, in which women struggle alongside men, it can be difficult for women to have the time, strength, or even the rationale to turn attention towards "feminist" issues, especially if they face the danger of alienating men.

It is excellent that we had the opportunity to come together to share what we have in common as women, but it's that gap in our experience, our differences, that it is most vital to recognize and to honestly come to terms with among ourselves, particularly if we want to work for international solidarity among women. The largest challenge in this sense lies with women in dominant countries. They may need to look beyond their feminist agendas, and project into the everyday lives of women who make up by far the greater part of the globe, and indeed to take up their struggles. It is unrealistic to stand by waiting and hoping for those women to "catch up" with "real" feminist issues.

Those of us in dominant nations must begin to recognize the extent to which we participate in an unjust global power structure and how we collude in perpetuating the struggles present in less powerful countries, bearing in mind that degrees of non-action equate with degrees of collusion. A close-at-hand indicator might be had from looking at the relative status of minority ethnic groups within our own societies.

We need to widen our agendas for feminism to include a genuine struggle to alleviate all the oppression facing women globally, beginning with those we ourselves participate in exerting.

In contemplating "what next?", it seems that any future seminar or conference needs to use as a starting point the above implications brought out in the Montreal seminar. We should come together again, not to explain repeatedly our varying experiences and perspectives, but to move forward to work out realistic strategies for dealing with root causes of women's oppression. It is significant that some 60 percent of the women at the Montreal seminar were from "developed" countries (about 50 percent from North America alone). We had the opportunity to hear what women from many other parts of the world had to tell us. The onus is upon us to listen and act with genuine solidarity, and as educators we must work out together what these messages mean for both our professional and our personal lives. ■

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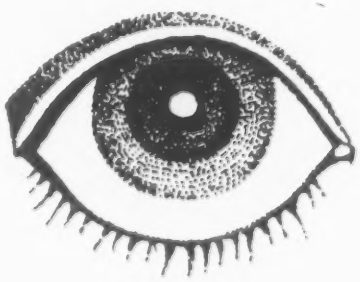

Resources

Women in the Third World: A Directory of Resources
edited by Thomas P. Fenton & Mary J. Heffron, Orbis Books, 1987, 141pp.
Annotated listings of resources on women's struggles in the Third World. Organized according to classifications--organizations, books, periodicals, pamphlets and articles, and audiovisuals.
Cost: US$9.95
Available from: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 10545, USA.

It's Our Move Now: A Community Action Guide to the United Nations Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women
International Women's Tribune Centre, 1987, 120pp.
Designed to help women's groups better understand and use the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. A basis for campaigns and strategies.
Cost: free to women and women's groups in the Third World, or for US$6.00
Available from: IWTC, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

Creating Alternatives: Women and Work
Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1987, 24pp.
Report of a workshop convened in Bangladesh during December 1986 to evaluate Oxfam America supported women's projects in India and Bangladesh. Projects are described briefly and the analysis and collective reflections of workshop participants are provided.
Available from: PRIA, 45 Sainik Farm, Khanpur, New Delhi 110062, INDIA.

Series: Women's Participation in Development, Didactic Bulletins 1-3
UNICEF and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 27pp. each.
Each booklet addresses a different theme including: how to organize women's groups, how to communicate effectively with grassroots women and how to conduct participatory research among women.
Available from: PRIA, 45 Sainik Farm, Khanpur, New Delhi 110062, INDIA.

How To Communicate Effectively With Grass-Roots Women?
How to Organise Women's Groups?
How To Conduct Participatory Research Among Women?
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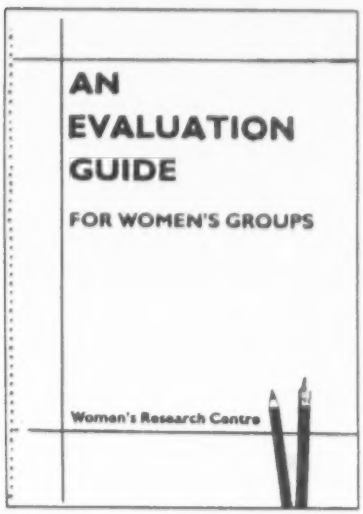
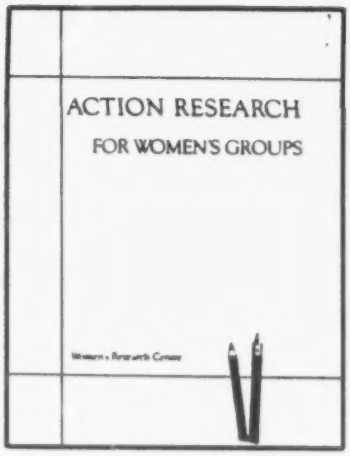
Resources

An Evaluation Guide For Women's Groups
Women's Research Centre, 1986, 72pp.
An alternative approach to evaluation. This "participant focussed" process makes it possible for women's groups to face evaluation with more knowledge, more confidence, and with a better chance of being respected participants in the evaluation process.
Cost: Cdn$4.20 women's groups; Cdn$7.00 others.
Available from: WRC, 1666 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., V6J 1X6, CANADA.





Action Research For Women's Groups
Women's Research Centre, 1987, 76pp.
A series of six papers outlining all stages of the research process from the decision to do research to final report writing and the use of research results. Cost: Cdn$2.70 women's groups; Cdn$4.50 others.
Available from: WRC, 1666 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., V6J 1X6, CANADA.

Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach
by Pat Maguire, 1987, 305pp.
Provides an introduction to and critique of participatory research from a feminist perspective. Uses a participatory research project with battered women in New Mexico as a case study.
Cost: US$8.80
Available from: Center for International Education, Hills House South, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. 01003, U.S.A.

Women's Kit
Participatory Research Group, 1987.
For use in English as a Second Language and literacy classes. Nine booklets describe many everyday issues in women's lives and provide stimulating material based on popular education materials from women's groups in the Third World. Cost: Individuals Cdn$25, Institutions Cdn$40 (plus postage and handling), free to Third World women's and popular education groups.
Available from: PRG, 309-229 College St., Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1R4, CANADA.

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Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, and aims to: promote the sharing of experiences, provide a forum for discussion and debate of key issues for women, share information on useful resources, and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face daily.

We welcome letters or short articles on your work and experiences. Through your contributions and involvement we can deepen our understanding and develop more effective strategies for action.

The ICAE Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and the empowerment of women.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is an international non-governmental organization with national member associations in over 90 countries, and networks in a variety of areas, including: peace, literacy, community health and popular education, workers' education, and participatory research, as well as the Women's Program. All networks are decentralized and coordinated by individuals and groups in different regions of the world.

The Women's Program is coordinated from Canada by the Participatory Research Group (PRG) working in collaboration with key contacts from various regions. PRG is a popular education and research collective. At present we are working primarily around Native Canadian and women's issues. PRG is also active in an international participatory research and popular education network.

The following agencies have provided ongoing financial support to the Women's Program: CIDA; SIDA; NOVIB; and FINNEDA.

Editorial

EDITORIAL

The articles in this issue of *Voices Rising* are linked by a common thread of concern with educational and organizational methodology. This is a broad theme, but one richly illustrated by the experiences of women educators whose accounts we've gathered here. The different political and social contexts in which they are working raise a variety of questions and challenges for the development of appropriate educational approaches. Yet there is also a surprising similarity in the kinds of issues they are grappling with and the lessons they have learned.

The growing body of experience and methodology being generated by women activists and popular educators all over the globe confirms that education for women (or for anyone for that matter) is not an abstract process. It is one that reaches to the very roots of women's lives. Education cannot be separated from the question of how women survive, how they organize their lives and take care of their families. Any attempt to develop education programs with and for women must therefore address the issues of women's everyday lives--the production of food or commodities for income, and the building of communication skills for the assertion of practical demands. A number of the articles in this issue show how responding to women's basic concerns was essential to the process of organizing.

The two lead articles--interviews with women from the Gregoria Apaza Centre in Bolivia and the Goodwill Literacy Program in inner-city Seattle in the United States--trace the problems that were encountered in the process of developing their respective education programs. They share with us the lessons and insights of their experience.

The interview with Maria Renee Bejarano from the Gregoria Apaza Centre restates many of the issues addressed in the last isssue of *Voices Rising*--the difficul' y of the transition from a small, mutually-supportive working group to a larger more structured organization with a division of responsibility and labour. The challenge is to grow, but without losing mutual support and caring amongst workers, democratic participation in decision-making and coherence of the program. The Gregoria Apaza experience also reinforces the necessity of developing practically useful skills as an integral component of any program with women. The value of learning to read and write or to understand social relations is undercut if women are not able to survive.

One important theme in the discussion with Mallory Clarke concerns the training of literacy tutors. In an urban US context, volunteer tutors are generally white and middle class, while learners come mainly from the black working class. The challenge here is to push the tutors to examine their own attitudes around race and class. Otherwise, we will find the learning situation reproducing the very relations of social subordination which the lite... y program is aimed at redressing. Mallory's postcript to the interview adds a new dimension. With the hindsight of several months she acknowledges that the program did not adequately recognise the creativity and capacity of the tutors themselves to learn through the process of teaching.

Participatory research (PR) as a methodological approach to working with women is also explored in this *Voices Rising*. A report from the Women's Studies and Resource Centre in the Philippines describes

Editorial

the effectiveness of a participatory investigation of grassroots women's social conditions. It provided the basic information for planning an education program, and developed skills amongst the participants in mathematics, communication, evaluation and confidence. At the same time it deepened knowledge and consciousness about the political and social context. Another article, a review of Pat McGuire's book on feminism and participatory research, reinforces the value of PR as an educational practice with women.

The use of women's life-stories as an educational tool appears in several of the articles. In the literacy work that Mallory describes, the stories of learners are recorded and then used as reading and discussion material. A similar process is employed by the Gregoria Apaza Centre in radio programs and booklets based on the testimonies of indigenous women who have migrated to the cities of Bolivia. The review of *Straight Stitching* describes a play based on the lives of women garment workers in Toronto. Life histories were central to a number of the workshops in the Caribbean women's seminar, "Making History Making Change," written up in the latest issue of *Woman Speak*. This is obviously an important and effective educational approach to women's learning.

The social divisions of race and ethnicity are a pervasive and persistent theme in many of the articles, for instance those on educational work with indigenous women in Bolivia, "illiterate" blacks in urban United States, Caribbean working women and immigrant garment workers in Canada. Although not discussed directly and comprehensively here, these examples show just how profoundly race and ethnic divisions intertwine with class to structure the possibilities for women's lives all over the world. As educators we are constantly challenged to find ways of deepening our understanding of this issue and improving the effectiveness of our practice in addressing it.

Both of the two main articles are based on interviews we conducted at the Montreal seminar. We're pleased to be still reaping the benefits of that face-to-face contact with those who attended, sharing their experiences and the value of the lessons they have learned. We hope this will prompt some of you to write about your programs, telling us why you came to organize in a particular way, and how you are managing the issues and contradictions in your work. □

International Literacy Year

1990 has been proclaimed "International Literacy Year" by the United Nations. In response the ICAE has initiated an international task force on literacy to involve non-governmental organizations and grassroots literacy workers in building the momentum for 1990 as a "people's year."

Women have a central contribution to make to International Literacy Year. The Women's Program is planning to publish a Special Issue of *Voices Rising* on literacy in October/November 1989 to bring to the ICAE World Assembly in January 1990. The theme of the world meeting of adult educators is "Literacy, Popular Education and Democracy."

What are the issues concerning women in literacy in your region? What is a feminist perspective on literacy? Does literacy open more doors for men than for women in our societies--and why? How can literacy programs be made more responsive to women's lives and needs? What are the issues and plans that we, as women, would like International Literacy Year to take up? Let us know your ideas. □

Update on the Women's Program

The last few months have been a busy and productive time for the Women's Program. There's lots to keep us occupied with our regular work of keeping up with correspondence, moving forward with different projects and raising enough funds to keep going--made more difficult by what seems to be a shift away from support to international women's networks now that the UN Decade is over. We have also been working on preparations for a small meeting of women and groups in our network from Latin America, Africa, North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The meeting was organized jointly with the Women's Network of the Latin American Council for Adult Education, and took place in October in Quito, Ecuador. Besides learning about popular education and women's organizing in Ecuador, we focussed on setting priorities for the Women's Program, through to the next ICAE General Assembly in January 1990 in Thailand.

The next issue of *Voices Rising* will highlight the different questions raised in Quito. We discussed women's leadership in adult education at local, national and international levels, and the role of networking programs in supporting women's efforts in leadership and organizational development. But for this edition we wanted to share briefly some of the outcomes of the meeting:

Clearer Accountability of the Program to its Primary Constituency

The Women's Program has grown rapidly in the last few years, and we realized that it's now essential to consolidate our mandate as an international network of grassroots educators and groups, and ensure the active involvement of this constituency in the leadership and work of the Program. The participants at the Quito meeting stressed that the Program's agenda must be more clearly linked to the concerns and priorities identified by groups with a firm and active local base in the different regions. As one step in this process, we are undertaking an organizational review to clarify the Program's decision-making process, and accountability to our constituency and to the International Council for Adult Education. In the interim we have established an advisory committee of our key regional contacts.

Advocacy--Promoting the Role of Women in the ICAE

Participants felt strongly that the ICAE must take measures to increase the representation of women in its structures and ensure that gender issues are highlighted in all program areas. A recommendation from the Quito meeting requests that the ICAE Executive establish an international Task Force to develop a Women's Action Plan, with one concrete goal being a significant increase in the percentage of women on the ICAE Executive starting with the 1990 election. While this must be done in close collaboration with the Women's Program, the participants stressed that the commitment and action be based in the Executive committee.

Emerging Theme Issues

During our time together we focused on two important challenges facing grassroots groups: a) leadership development in the context of building democratic organizations; and b) trends and concerns related to funding for women's groups and education. Participants felt that the Women's Program should play a role in facilitating discussion and action on these issues, and we established a working committee to concentrate on this. A first step will be the production and distribution of a case study from Jamaica documenting the experiences of the Sistren Theatre Collective as they have dealt with the contradictions and challenges of working as an independent women's collective.

Solidarity Action for Women

Participants agreed that more consistent and coordinated action was required to bring to life the ongoing priority of "solidarity" within the Program's mandate. In the short-term the Women's Program will promote specific support and actions for Women in Prisons. You'll find a first leaflet on the situation of women in prison in South Africa included in this *Voices Rising*. Starting next issue, we'll include a regular page where we can share information and make calls for action in support of women popular educators who have faced repression for their efforts at organizing on behalf of women for democracy, peace and justice.

Strengthening Regional Networks and Links between Regions

Besides endorsement of the next stages of work for the Women's Program, our time together in Quito also allowed participants the time to clarify regional plans, and begin to discuss possible joint projects between the different regional networks. While each region is anxious to strengthen its contacts with grassroots educators, the meeting noted that links to progressive popular education in North America and Europe continue to be one of our weakest links. What more can we do to more effectively involve grassroots women's groups in the "North" in the network?

The meeting was a landmark for the Women's Program, and it will no doubt take us some time to sort through all the different implications. The next *Voices Rising* will explore the issues more thoroughly. In the meantime, we would really welcome your input into this process. Write us with your ideas, responses and questions. □

Issues in Literacy in the Urban U.S.

An Interview With Mallory Clarke

Mallory Clarke works for the Goodwill Literacy Project in central Seattle, on the West Coast of the United States. The Goodwill Literacy Project is aimed at learners who read at or up to the equivalent of a grade four level. The main form of tutoring is on a one-to-one basis using volunteers. The project is also developing a small group format for future literacy teaching, for which Mallory was specifically hired. There are about 60 students and a small over-extended staff of four who concentrate on different aspects of the program's coordination.

During the seminar on The Feminist Challenge to Popular Education in Montreal last year, Jenny Horsman for Voices Rising *asked Mallory about her work with the Goodwill Literacy Project.*

Who are the students in the program?

Our students are primarily the lower strata of the working class. I think they are three-quarters black, and about half of them are unemployed--which is surprising to me, that that many have jobs. But then the kinds of jobs they have are car-washers, baggers in grocery stores, waiters, waitresses, that sort of thing. We have some semi-street people in the program. There are a few more men than women. None of them read above a grade four level. There are a few people who never went to school at all. Most of the others dropped out in elementary school in order to work or because of family problems.

The project is not supposed to be taking developmentally-disabled or severely language-disabled people, but there really isn't another place for them to go. So far we have only been able to say no to people who are non-readers because they are recovering from strokes for example. We're also not supposed to be taking English as a Second Language (ESL) students, unless they communicate fairly well in the English language, because we haven't trained our tutors in this. But we do, we can't say no.

So we are talking about people who really have a hard time speaking up, people who have very low self-confidence, a self-image that is very restricted. We are also talking about worldly wise, dedicated hard workers.

Could you describe the learners' community a little?

Seattle is interesting in that we don't have the sort of centre ghetto that other cities our size have. Prior to the Second World War, the black community in the city was highly integrated into the life of the town. The newspaper was owned by a black man--not the *black* newspaper, but *the* newspaper. The black community at that time was mostly middle class; the neighbourhoods were integrated even though there was a lot of violence against people who moved into the richer neighbourhoods. It's not as if there was no racism, it's just that it had a different quality than it had in other cities.

Then after the war there was a larger influx of working-class black people, for example a lot of single women who worked as domestics. The relations between whites and blacks became economically more like they are in other cities.

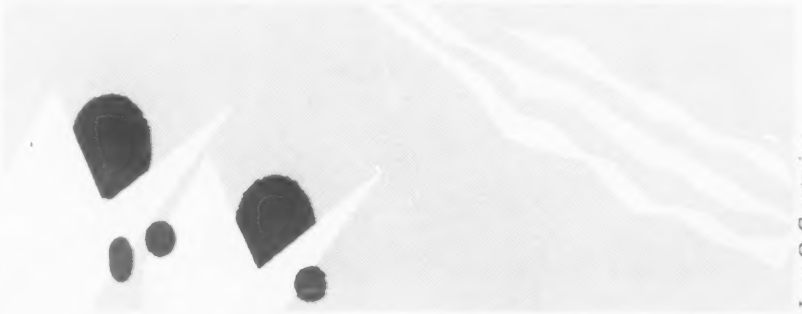
The black folks in our community tend to be more homogenous than in other communities, and tend to have a bit more of the resources that are not available in other cities. For example, we don't have giant areas of tenement buildings, even though there are certainly areas of town where the housing is very run down, very poor and where it's primarily black, although there are other minorities and poor whites as well.

Who are the tutors in the program?

The tutors are mostly white, and, as in most mainstream literacy programs, are middle class. But at the same time, we don't want to fall into the pattern of fairly wealthy, older white ladies helping out the poor.

How do you select your tutors?

We do a lot of screening and the screening process for tutors very carefully addresses the issues of race and class. The



Jorge O. Guastavino

first layer of screening the potential tutors do on their own. We bring them to an orientation. We tell them about our program and its history, and using actual examples, we have a discussion about what paternalism is and about the times that all of us have participated in that.

We also have a discussion of an article we send out before the orientation. We choose a subject that can give people a chance to talk about the relationship between literacy and poverty. We always get people who say, "I just can't imagine what it's like not to be able to read." We'd like to say, "If you can't imagine it, go home, we're not interested in you." But this type of reaction is so universal that if we were to do that we would have absolutely no tutors. So we say, "Well, imagine it, figure it out, because this is something you need to do in order to be a reasonable tutor." We give them a chance to talk about the relationship between poverty and illiteracy. We interview each potential tutor individually. If they don't see that there is a dual relationship, that it is not illiteracy that causes poverty, that illiteracy and poverty are not merely a cycle that one can break out of; if they persist in thinking illiteracy and poverty are individual problems, and don't demonstrate any capacity for seeing the issue more broadly, then we tell them about other programs that will be more appropriate for them. If we don't think they should be in contact with a non-reader, we tell them so. We say, "We think you should learn to play the piano." Or, "How would you like to stuff envelopes for us so that our student volunteers can do something more integral to the program."

So we end up with a group of volunteers who have a political orientation or the potential for a political orientation. They are required to attend a workshop for about fifteen hours. It's not like we tell them exactly what we want them to think when they get out. We treat the tutors the same way we treat the students--they get to develop some of this on their own. But we do have criteria for them that we don't for the students. We think that there are certain things that they have to have absorbed in order to be a tutor. After all, we are pushing the tutors on the students. We want to have some control over that.

One of the things we talk about explicitly in the orientation and in the workshop is the question of race, how that's related to poverty, and how, therefore, it's related to literacy. Also we've done a fairly good screening so that we

don't usually have to deal with the issue of racism in terms of mistakes tutors have made, at least that we know of. That's one of the things that scares us about tutoring. We have a good sense of what goes on in the tutoring sessions, and we get the summation of the tutors and the students. But because of the kind of people the students are, they are not likely to sit down and talk to black folks, let alone me for example, about the racism of the tutors. But our best guess is that it's not a major problem.

One of the most exciting aspects of the program is the transformation that happens to the volunteers in their contact with the students. The kind of transformation that happens with their ideas is very exciting. The bond that grows up between the two, the kind of reaching across gaps of race and of class mostly, it's so genuinely human, it's so politicizing to the tutors. We still think that this is very valuable.

What educational approach do you try to develop for the tutors?

Well, besides the overall orientation to what literacy is in our society, and what it is not (eg. literacy does not lead to employment), we give them a series of teaching methods that are all useful and stem from the idea of language experience. This is the closest thing to a student-centred learning approach that we can get to in a one-to-one situation--given that we don't have total control over what the tutors are actually going to be saying. We encourage the tutors to have the bulk of the written materials in the student's own language in the beginning stages.

There are a whole lot of methods you can use to teach the skills of reading and comprehension. Understanding what is read, evaluating what is read, being angry at what is read, etc. We think that the methodology is the weakest link in our tutor-training right now. Part of it is that we are dealing with volunteer tutors rather than with staff. But we also don't feel that the comprehension part of our training has enough meat in it. The tutors are not really grasping the opportunities for teaching literacy creatively.

This was brought home to me by the following incident. One of the tutors came to me and said, "I'm not sure if I want to continue to tutor; my student isn't learning. We have been drilling the rules of reading for a year, and he hasn't learned anything yet." I immediately called up the student. We had a long talk, and it actually wasn't as bad as the tutor had described. The student had enjoyed some of the things that they had done, and they had in fact done more than just drill in rules.

But it turned out that this gentleman was an incredible story teller, an artist. He has an amazing history of being educated in rural Alabama schools. And after hearing that story I caught his tutor in the hall and said: "Get this guy's story down on paper!" She did, and we were then able to use it as a way to get the tutors to go more deeply into language experience techniques. This guy's story about his school and his blind teachers, his wood stove and his having to go fetch lunch for the principal during the lunch break--all of those things were

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so vividly expressed that it really moved a lot of tutors into using the language experience technique. We said, here is this story, we want you to participate in the creation of a book. We need the language experience stories from your students too.

How do you assess the tutors?

This is one of the major differences between us and the mainstream programs, structurally. The tutoring pairs work in the Centre. This means also that we are in constant contact with the students. We are always able to catch them in the halls and say, "So, how's it going? What does it feel like? How's your tutor?"

After every 50 hours of tutoring time the students come in for an assessment. We see this as a test of their tutor and of us rather than a test of the students. And it's very exciting--because it's also a time to evaluate. A student will say, "These are the things that we do that I like. These are the things that we do that I don't like. These are the things that I've learned."

We're very interested in accountability. A lot of the mainstream programs that do one-to-one tutoring are so fearful of saying anything negative to their tutors that they do not find out if anybody's learning anything. And of course there are different criteria for learning "anything." What is "anything"? Rather than changing grade levels, our biggest concern is that the goals the students set are being met. That's what the assessments are based on. We check on the short-term goals: "You said you were interested in getting a driver's license, do you still want that?" And, "Are you making progress toward that? Or do you have it?" We also check on the long-term goals: "You want to be able to read to your children. Do you feel that you've made any gains on that?

The test we give is one that involves recognizing words out of context to help us get an idea of grade levels. There is also a comprehension test which is more of a conversation starter than a test. But it does give us some indication of comprehension and reading. That way we can get a sense of the things that the tutors are doing and whether they bear any relationship to gaining literacy skills.

Accountability is something most literacy programs do not want to deal with. But, we think it's a disservice to the student not to ask whether the methods that we are using actually increase literacy skills. We see literacy students in other programs go for years without ever gaining any literacy skills.

We find that there is never any grade level change in the first 50 hour assessment we do. We don't expect it. The national figure is one grade for every 100 hours, but we're not going to judge anyone by that. We do see that in almost every case the students are very pleased with the program, because of the amount of self-confidence they have gained. They feel more prepared to tackle the problems in their lives, problems they can't solve with their literacy skills but which they can solve with other kinds of skills. They seem to be better able to access those capacities in themselves, even after 50 hours of contact with the program.

How do you see the program developing?

We want to increase the amount of time that the students can participate in the program. We're looking at two ways of doing that. One is that we've got a marvelous grant for students to set up a computer centre. The students have been asking for this. Hopefully within the next couple of weeks we'll actually have the computers in place and begin to find public domain learning programs for our students so that outside of their tutor sessions they can come in and spend time using the computers. That also makes them computer literate.

We'd like to develop a taped book library. Our tutors will never be able to give up more than the four hours we require, but with taped books students can practice reading along with the written text for as long as they wish.

Another aspect of the project that we'd like to improve is the suitability and relevance of materials to the lives of the learners. We make sure that the materials that are available are multi-racial with a heavy emphasis on the black community. We have a section in our library solely on black history, another section on black literature and poetry, even though that's not the only place you'll find stories about black people. We're hoping to get some materials from South Africa. Even though the language is very different, it's at a reading level that I think would still be accessible. I think we could get over the vocabulary differences.

But we don't have the same sort of materials for Native Americans, or for Asians. Nor do we have enough materials on women. We have searched and searched. We have a whole series of books written between levels one and four about the lives of women. Some of them are really great, some of them are medium. Our major complaint is that so much of the material ends well. And that just doesn't represent reality. I'd rather have them not end and then have the tutors and the students discuss it.

But of all the improvements we want to make, our major concern for the next year will be developing small group classes. We hope to make group teaching the focus of the program without losing the wonderful one-to-one tutoring pairs.

Clifford Harper

How is the program addressing the concern about women? Have you considered having separate women's groups?

We had thought that one of the first groups would be an all-woman group, but we face logistical problems. We're going to have to group students in terms of skill level, and at present it is not feasible to separate by gender as well. If we had a pool of 100 students we probably could find enough women for a separate group. But the students don't come to us like that, they come two or three a week.

All of the people that work in the program, except the receptionist, are women and we all come from a background of identifying women's issues separately from other issues. So that's our perspective, but because anti-racism is such a clear focus among all four of us as well, it hasn't been our number one priority to separate women out. And women have not asked to be separated out. We clearly have a concerned focus: we will make sure to the best of our ability, to the best of the world's ability, to provide materials about women and and will group women as they ask us to. The black women in the program, the tutors, students, and staff, are going to have a poetry reading evening together.

What are the key issues you worry about?

The first response, not from me but from the rest of the group, is the question of political action as it's associated with literacy. The workers in the project come out of the Paolo Freire tradition, not necessarily in our lives but in our study. For the others the program represents the need to be involved in community activity and community action. They would identify the problem as the fact that this community action is not happening. I'm sure this is a concern of literacy programs all over the developed world.

I personally don't feel that the absence of community action is a problem. We are not in a revolutionary period. The times that the literacy programs are deeply involved in social or political movements are times when there is society-wide upheaval. Literacy programs do not create social movements. Literacy programs can be attached to social upheaval... as it arises unevenly in society. In our particular city we don't have that sort of grassroots movement going on, partly because of the kind of city that this is. The social movement we do have has to do with the electoral campaign around Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition, and off and on with the solidarity movement, with Nicaragua and against apartheid. Our students though are not involved in these. Were they to have their own movement it would be about different things. They are very interested in anti-apartheid, in Nicaragua, and in a whole host of issues. Their experience exposes the lies for them--they don't have wool over their eyes--so with any of those issues that you might raise, they are very receptive and very interested and ask very intelligent questions. But it doesn't mean that they are going to put their lives into those movements. They're going to go home and take care of the kids. And they're going to continue looking for jobs. They're going to continue battling welfare. There may be a time when these very same people are involved in social issues, but the issues will be different than they are now.

But I don't see the lack of community action as such a problem. I mean, I'm involved in literacy work because I love reading and I love to watch people learn, not because I think that at this point in time it's a key to social revolution. For that I'm involved in the solidarity movement. I'm actually very happy with literacy work. The program I work in is calm, constructive, progressive, supportive. The students love the program; the tutors love the program. Though of course there are too many things to do.

POSTSCRIPT: We recently received a letter from Mallory:

Thanks for sending me a copy of the interview Jenny and I recorded last October. Rereading it was very instructive. I can see how very far we've come in a year. For example, the group classes are firmly in place with five scheduled to start (or restart) the last week in September. They've so upped the level of community spirit, student involvement and general excitement, we can't imagine the school without them. The computer centre has two Apples and a Macintosh, plus a great library of review programs. Somebody is always in there, laughing or studiously staring into the screens. We recently purchased rolling tables so that the computers can be taken to classes and the training sessions. The tape library fills two cardboard boxes and is still growing. The advisory council has gained student members and several students lead or co-lead sub-committees.

But probably the biggest change is the most subtle. Reading the interview a year later, I can detect a heavy mistrust of volunteers on my part. We knew that about ourselves and even joked about it at our own expense. We knew that we couldn't use a traditional model of tutor training to produce a team of popular educators (based on the hope that people will "get" student empowerment if you repeat it often enough.) At least we knew we weren't doing it. But it took a year to recognize that mistrust as a flaw in our theoretical perspective and to change it. Now our trainings reflect an increased respect for tutors. The trainings I have designed since '85 have increasingly given tutors more theory and general methodology and fewer directives and workbooks. At least I recognized that volunteers are an intelligent and creative bunch and are capable of designing great lessons to fit their particular students, if given sufficient information.

The changes in the last year show a qualitative maturation of all of us in the program. We are moving away from a somewhat fearful control and toward more participation and input. We aren't doing this for moral reasons but in order to increase the quantity of creativity that is brought to bear on literacy learning and to increase the level of empowerment. How can unempowered tutors empower students? This sort of change is a long process, something we have to be very thoughtful about. We don't want to abandon the tutors to their own devices nor pretend we have nothing to say about about teaching or learning. We do want to bring our practice more in line with our theory.

So thanks again for the copy of the interview. It was a great insight.

Sincerely,

Mallory Clarke

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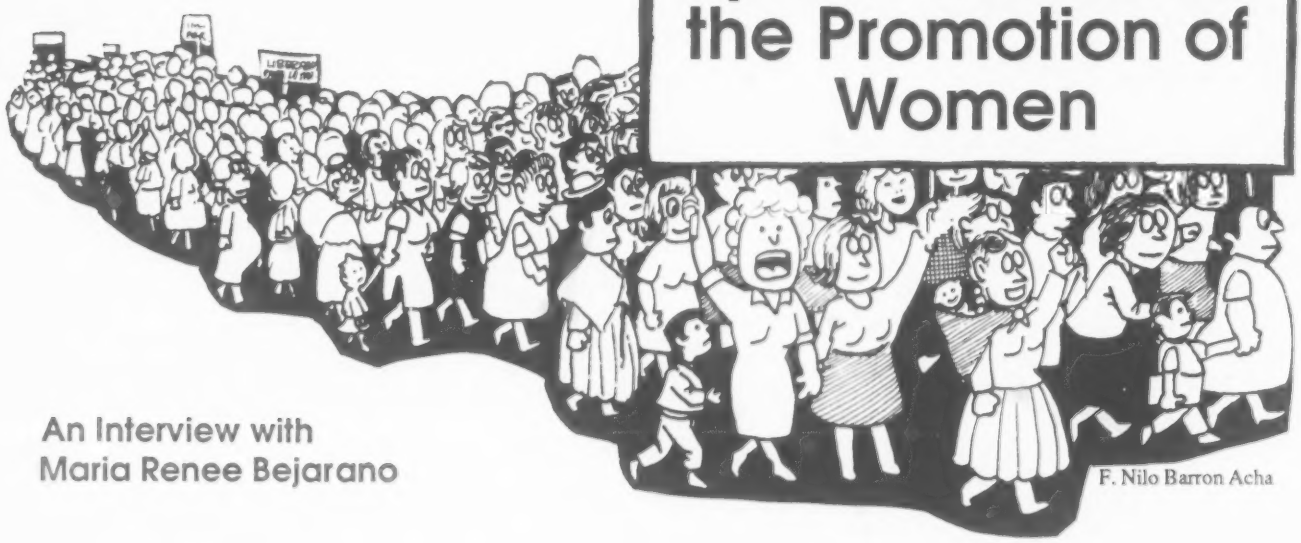
USA

Building a Women's Centre:

The Gregoria Apaza Centre for the Promotion of Women



F. Nilo Barron Acha

An Interview with Maria Renee Bejarano

Maria Renee Bejarano works with the Gregoria Apaza Centre for the Promotion of Women, in La Paz, Bolivia. During the seminar on "The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education" in Montreal last year, Lynda Yanz and Marie Lorenzo talked to Maria Renee for Voices Rising.

How did the Gregoria Apaza Centre begin?

It was formed around 1983 by a group of three women who were active in one of the progressive parties. One of their goals in starting the centre was to have continuity in their work. This was during a democratic period in Bolivia when political work was open, but there could suddenly be a military takeover and work would have to be done in a clandestine way.

This progressive party had a women's section, women working politically with women. But there began to be limitations to women's work in the party. The women's section was controversial. The leaders had the traditional left view of women's role in politics, and didn't see women's organizing as relevent. What for? They didn't take women seriously, so women's struggle within the party was hard.

This attitude towards women was another reason for creating the centre, and the third reason was the crisis in the party that led to its division into factions. The women decided to seek political independence and the Gregoria Apaza Centre was born.

Why was it called Gregoria Apaza?

Gregoria Apaza was an Aymara, a peasant leader, who fought with her people against the Spanish conquerors. Before the arrival of the Spanish, Bolivia was mainly populated by two indigenous peoples, the Quechuas and the Aymaras. Most of the political work done by the three founders of the centre was with peasant women of Aymara origin. So the name of Gregoria Apaza meant a lot to them and it was a reference point for their identity.

What were the goals of the centre?

To build a non-government organization working with women, which would strengthen the women's movement. The centre was one of the first women's institutions to define work principles of addressing the gender issue, the class issue and the ethnic issue. This was important because previous work with women, by political parties or non-government organizations, had always been based on one of these principles, for instance the class issue, but without addressing the gender or the ethnic issue. The Aymara and Quechua peoples, were seen as folklore--the little Indian with the llama (the animal they tend in the mountains) and the traditional alpaca woolen clothing. Although you can see Indian peoples everywhere in the cities, they are not recognized as cultures that have survived centuries of colonization, that have

their own ideology and a particular way of ordering the world.

What work did the centre do at first?

The beginnings were dedicated to establishing the group, finding an office and trying to get funds for an office and for salaries. The founders thought the centre could not go ahead on a voluntary basis, since they had families and they had to survive. This work took a lot of time.

Then they began literacy projects with women's groups. Many women participated, because women in Bolivia have few opportunities to learn to read and write, especially in the countryside. This literacy work helped to strengthen women's groups in the slums.

But the people were very poor and couldn't spend all their lives learning reading and writing, and training. They needed to take some money home. We soon realized that we can give workshops and classes, but how are people going to survive? So they tried several cooperative production projects such as cooking bread and selling it. After trying many things they formed a group called "Jams". This was a small project, they got $1200 in funds so they bought stoves, pots and other things to make jam, which they put in glasses and sold. With this money they had a small income and the group could continue operating. That was the first project. At the beginning it was difficult. They had to compete with the factories. They had to make good jam and sell it competitively in the market, and at the same time make sure they earned an income that could support the group. And everything was done in a very rudimentary, domestic way. It was so difficult. But the group continues operating today and the jam has a market.

Bolivia, like so many Latin American countries, has a context of political instability and violence. For example, I am 30 years old and I have seldom seen democracies. I have grown used to living in the midst of war. In 1980, when I was a leader in the student movement, I was talking in a meeting and a grenade was thrown into the room. This was during the period when the Popular Democratic Unity Front (UDP), had won presidential elections which had been forced on the dictatorship by popular struggle. Then, in order to prevent the elected president from taking over the government, the military took power and violent repression ensued. However, two years later, in 1982, internal and international pressure--the latter mostly due to the military's involvement in drug trafficking--forced them to allow the UDP to take the government.

At that time I shared in the euphoria of the people and the celebrations in the streets. But hope soon vanished. The UDP government did not respond to the popular classes who had struggled and shed their blood to put them into power. The popular struggle then turned against the UDP, new elections were called within a year, and a centre-right coalition led by a former dictator won.

So, like other parts of Latin America and countries such as the Philippines, imperialism first imposed many years of dictatorship. Now imperialism allows the form to be democratic, but it is a totally controlled and restricted democracy.

At the same time, the economic situation has been worsening, there is more and more unemployment, more and more illiteracy, more and more poverty. People are desperate. It is a time bomb but no one knows when and how it is going to explode, and what will be its expression. It is within this context that we have to develop our work with women.

How did you start doing other things?

Well, at the beginning we could only get funds for small projects. Around $1000 for different types of projects, and we had to really run after the money. We developed our work, doing workshops with groups that were already organized and helping to create new groups. In order to reach more women we started using the radio, and making radio programs directed to women in the popular sector. Step by step, we began to gain acceptance. So the groups that gave us funds saw that our work produced results, that we were organizing people, that we were beginning to develop our base. The centre was one of the first women's institutions working with women in La Paz.

Gregoria Apaza Centre

Madrugada

CENTRO DE PROMOCION DE LA MUJER "GREGORIA APAZA"

How is the group organized? How do you work?

At first we were a sort of collective, or more exactly, a family. There were only three or four of us working there, all friends. We shared everything. That family quickly grew, which brought responsibilities, jobs and the need for efficiency. All these things require a different kind of organization, because

J. Alfaro

many things got mixed up--emotional, personal relations mixed with work relations, which resulted in problems.

So, last year, after an evaluation meeting, we went through a profound transformation. It arose from asking ourselves how we could have an organization that was efficient, without losing what we had achieved in terms of being a large family. We didn't want to lose those warm, personal relations amongst our members, the friendship and the sharing.

It was a difficult discussion that hasn't finished yet. We analyzed different options, among them functioning as a collective. Finally, we decided we had to institutionalize. So we went back to the constitution of the Gregoria Apaza Association and made some changes, and this is the base on which we now operate. But we are in a constant process of analysis and change.

What is the structure of the centre now?

On the one side we have the centre--the office with eight people working in the administration and with the groups. On the other side there is the Association, where people interested in our way of approaching work with women can participate. The main decisions are made by the Association's Assembly, where everyone participates, and where the constitution and the annual budget is approved. The centre's Executive Director submits a report to the Assembly, which includes an analysis of the political situation. This is important because the political reality changes so quickly. You cannot predict anything in political terms. So we need to be constantly updating our analysis of the political conditions of the country.

Then there is an Executive Council, made up of two members of the centre and two of the Association. This Executive Council elects the Executive Director of the Gregoria Apaza Centre.

At the moment the centre has "teams" in two areas: one is the Production and Services Area, which works to generate income by producing goods and providing services. The second is the Educational Services Area, which manages a training program, a technical school for women, a communication program and a documentation centre.

How do the area teams operate?

The teams respond to the particular needs of each area. In the educational area there are two psycologists, one sociologist, two social communication experts and one person in charge of organizing the documentation centre. There are specific problems that require specific technical solutions, from designing programs to deciding on group dynamics and methodologies. Many of the women we work with don't know how to read and write, so we have to use non-traditional educational techniques. This is where we use popular education, and the professional people work in designing group methods, drama, projection techniques.

In the production and services area we have two economists and a promoter-coordinator. The problem with the production projects is that they often fail, like many similar projects in Bolivia and throughout Latin America. Perhaps because we are creating group experiences that are "socialized", with a different organization of labour, we think we don't have to worry about making economic sense. For us, these units may be a means of doing political work, organizing, or women's training. But they also have their own objective, which is to generate income. This is the most important thing for the women participants. So

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they have to be successful and profitable. The projects have to be able to compete in the market.

The role of the economists is therefore to design workable projects. Their work is also important for negotiations with our funders, who put a lot of pressure on us. Sometimes they decide that making piggy banks is the fashion and they want everyone to make little piggy banks! Now our economists can do some market research and decide what is convenient for us to work on.

How do the different teams relate to each other?

We close the office and meet for one week at the end of the year and for another week at the beginning of the year. At the end of the year we evaluate reports from each of the programs. The meeting at the beginning of the year is to plan. We also have bi-monthly meetings of two representatives from each work area, to do ongoing planning, coordination and evaluation.

Do the people working in the office meet as well?

We have informal meetings once a month. In the office there is an administrator and a secretary, the rest of us work within the two areas. Previously, we used to meet twice a month, but we realized that although it was important to get together during the growing period to talk about what we were doing, we were wasting too much time. This is a problem of always searching for the perfect equilibrium--having time for our personal relationships, but not so much time that our work suffers.

There are men working at the Centre. Why? What are their roles?

One is a psychologist who works to support training of mothers in the "early stimulation programs" for children in the daycare centres. He develops appropriate educational techniques for people who do not read and write, like our women. The economist for our production projects is also a man. When we advertised for two economists, many people applied--men and women, but more men than women. Clearly, many women never complete university and few take economics. We hired the two best applicants, one of them was a woman. Our priority in the selection were women, but only one woman was selected. This is a reality that we cannot change. But this guy's role is technical support, he is not responsible for ideological or educational work with women. The other men are the administrator and the courier.

We work mainly with Aymara peasant women who have migrated to the city. One of our projects is a radio program called "The Voice of the Kantutas." The kantuta is a flower, like a lily, the same colour as the Bolivian flag. We tape-record the stories of women's experiences and broadcast them in the Aymara language. In one of our meetings, an Aymara woman stood up and said she wanted to talk about her experience. She told us that soon after she first came to the city, she met a man. They went to live together, and, well... one day she realized she was pregnant. She was sixteen years old.

By the time she realized she was pregnant, she was already in her fourth or sixth month. She didn't have any knowledge of her own sexuality, her own body. She didn't know anything about menstruation, not a thing. She told us that the first time she menstruated she put some small pieces of cloth there. She never knew what to do with the pieces of cloth, so she would hide them in the soil, she would make a little hole and cover the pieces of cloth and she would put on another little piece. She was only sixteen.

The man found work somewhere else and left her. So she was alone. She began working as a domestic because it was all she knew how to do. She worked until she gave birth when she had to quit. Nobody would hire her with a baby and that was the only work she could do. She didn't know how to read and write--all she had done in her life was to clean floors, cook, clean, sweep. So she left the baby with some relatives.

Three years later she came to ask for her child, she wanted him back. Her relatives didn't want to give him back. It had cost them money to care for the child, and he would soon would be able to earn an income himself. They said that if she wanted him back, she would have to pay. So she went back to the countryside, and worked at spinning and knitting blankets and bedcovers, and in the harvests. Finally they gave her back the child.

"I left my child to be able to save some money," she said, "and after three years I was back in the same place where I'd begun. I want to tell these things so they do not to happen to others."

This means that the centre is a group for women, but not necessarily a women's group.

Yes. I suppose this is unusual in the West, but it isn't a problem for our group. We haven't defined ourselves as feminist, although in our views and in our work we share a lot with Latin American groups that call themselves feminist. Of course, women do the ideological work for the group. Also, women can't do education about women's issues, for instance sexuality, with a man present. Actually, there are differences among women on this topic, class differences mainly, different ways of looking at the same things, of living through them, of feeling them. And a male presence would only make matters worse.

What area do you work in?

Up to now I've worked in the production and services area, I used to be in charge of childcare. But this year we realized that it was really necessary to have one or two people systematizing our working experience in women's education and training, in order to begin to develop a theory about our approach. We have lots of material, such as tapes and reports. But because of the way our work has developed, we haven't had the opportunity to develop a synthesis of it all and discern our overall direction. I am now in charge of that task.

Do all staff at the centre share the same political view?

No. Some are still activists in the progressive parties. Others are independent progressives, who don't participate in any political party. Our organization does not interfere in these matters. One thing we don't allow is the use of the women's groups we work with for political campaigning. This year we have city elections in La Paz, and we think it is important that the women we work with participate. So, in order for them to gain knowledge of the different options, we are developing a seminar

It is so expensive to raise a child. Poverty is immense in Bolivia. So, when children are older, when they are 7 years old, they begin to earn an income. Boys produce more income, they sell things, wash cars, shoe-shine, beg. That is why people prefer boys; giving birth to a girl is bad luck, it worsens the poverty.

So poverty worsens women's situation, and women's situation cannot be divorced from poverty. A woman never learns how to read and write and the only thing she is trained for is cleaning, sweeping, caring for children, and cooking. It's poverty that defines women's role in the family. And in the case of the Aymara women who migrate to the city, this role is established at very early age.

In the countryside poverty is worse than in the city. Many women move to La Paz at sixteen or seventeen years of age, but others have to go when they are 5 or 6 years old. The mothers put them in a truck and send them to the city. Or the mothers take the little girls and knock at the doors of middle-class professionals who can pay for a domestic, or at rich peoples' doors, and they give their daughters to be servants in exchange for room and board. They give them away.

You might also see a little 7 year old Aymara girl caring for a 3 year old baby. In the daycare centre where I work, a little 3 year old girl came with a large wound on her wrist, covered with little pieces of cloth. I said to her, "What happened to you? Who's done this to you?" And she said, "My mom, 'cause I lost my baby brother's milk bottle." Three years old, she could barely talk, and she had the responsibility of caring for the milk bottle of her eight month old baby brother. And her mother had beaten her so much for having lost the milk bottle because it was a lot of money, three and a half dollars. The most they make is $15, $20, maybe $50 a month. Poverty influences women's roles and attitudes, it can't be separated.

PASADO ALGUN TIEMPO...
-TRABAJO HASTA 16 HORAS SIN DESCANSAR...
... QUÉ AGOTADA ESTOY, QUISIERA VOLVER A MI PUEBLO.
17
Juan Alfaro Ramirez

From a booklet produced by the Gregoria Apaza Centre: *Some time later... "I work up to 16 hours without resting...", "I'm so worn out, I want to go back to my people."*

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where different candidates will present their views. Obviously we are in some way biased toward progressive candidates; and we don't see this as a contradiction, because the fact that we are working with women of the popular classes is in itself a political definition.

The centre's work has developed in many different fields. What do you think has been its main contribution?

The most important aspect of Gregoria Apaza's work is our new vision of working with women. It isn't that women are being organized because of our work. Take the case of the women miners. They were one of the first women's groups to organize themselves, but they were organized around the demands of the miners, their husbands. It was a political class struggle and there was no demand for space for women. Peasant women have also organized by themselves, inspired and strengthened by the men's peasant movement. Those women began to actively participate in struggles, in blockades, in fighting the military. Now their organization has split. One group says that peasant women should have their own organization, that the peasant women's traditional submissive role won't allow them to actively participate in meetings--they don't speak out, they are shy and they need to develop skills for this. The other group says no, they should be together in the same organization as the men.

The women who began the centre were critical of the ways women had been treated within progressive organizations. At Gregoria Apaza we don't assert that women, in order to be able to participate in the political movement must leave behind her home, her children, her brooms and pots. We believe that a cold marxist discourse will not appeal to women, especially women in the popular sectors.

Women will rally behind those who talk of their daily problems, of them as subjects, of their feelings. In the same way that their feelings have screwed them up, because "a woman is all heart, she is not objective," (which is pure garbage,) those very feelings are what will give women new value. Those feelings must find ways of expression. Women's daily life is crucial to their being. When they were militants in political parties, they were criticized for being women, for being hormonal, for not being objective and not thinking coldly with their heads, but with their stomachs. Why should they feel ashamed because they cry, because they feel! At Gregoria Apaza our contribution lies in the fact that our approach is not the classic way of working with women or with the popular sectors. □

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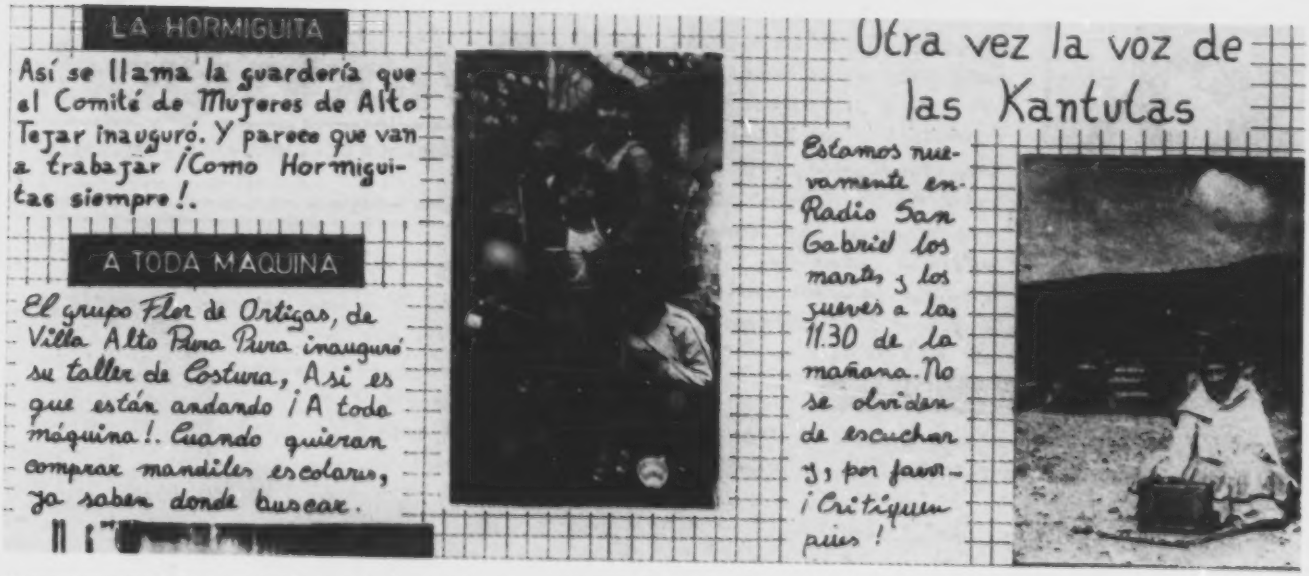
LA HORMIGUITA
Así se llama la guardería que el Comité de Mujeres de Alto Tejar inauguró. Y parece que van a trabajar ¡Como Hormiguitas siempre!.
A TODA MAQUINA
El grupo Flor de Ortigas, de Villa Alto Pura Pura inauguró su taller de Costura, Asi es que están andando ¡A toda máquina!. Cuando quieran comprar mandiles escolares, ya saben donde buscar.
Otra vez la voz de las Kantutas
Estamos nuevamente en Radio San Gabriel los martes y los jueves a las 11.30 de la mañana. No se olviden de escuchar y, por favor ¡Critiquen pues!

These photos are from a newsletter produced by the Gregoria Apaza Centre for the Promotion of Women called Madrugada.

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WSRC

Consolidating Voices of Mindanao Women

The following report was sent to the Women's Program by the Women's Studies and Resource Center, which is based on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines.

The Women's Studies and Resource Center (WSRC), formally launched its education program in 1984 at the height of the Marcos regime. This period was marked by the growing people's resistance to the dictatorship.

The overall objective of the program is to accelerate the active and significant participation of Mindanao women in social transformation. Specifically, it aims at increasing the level of critical consciousness of women at the same time as equipping them with basic leadership, organizing and management skills. The WSRC works primarily with women workers, peasant women, urban poor women and Tribal Filipinos; and secondarily with women nurses, women teachers and women in the religious sector.

The seed of the WSRC was sown when a group of women involved in women's concerns and social research met in 1982 in Davao City to discuss women's issues and the complexity of women's problems. The group then developed into a study and resource team, which initiated a preliminary investigation into the living conditions of Mindanao women. This was conducted in 1982-1983.

The aim of the study was to establish the concrete basis for an ongoing education campaign program by obtaining a comprehensive picture of the conditions of the women in the island. This study was a breakthrough in terms of using a participatory research approach, as the women involved in the study were the researcher-respondents themselves. Participants represented the following sectors: workers, peasants, urban poor, tribal Filipinos, Moro and religious. The results of the study are reflected in a booklet entitled *Voices of Mindanao Women*.

The education program began with trainers' training for grassroots women in Mindanao island. This then facilitated the development of a curriculum for a basic education seminar, which was undertaken by the participants in the trainers' training to reach out to other women in their localities. The first participants in the basic education seminars then became the members of core groups that were responsible for reproducing the seminar, in this way expanding women's organizing. Most of the seminars conducted by the core groups were multisectoral in nature, with participants coming from the various sectors--workers, urban poor, and peasants. Occasionally, low-income professional women were invited to the basic education seminars, where they were expected to share their experiential learnings with the other women in the group.

The arrangement of topics in the basic education seminars is based on the expectations of the requesting groups, including factors such as level of formal education, political orientation, and time--experience has shown that women can only attend a maximum of a two-day live-in seminar.

While the basic education seminar is aimed at giving a comprehensive orientation to women who are interested in getting involved in the women's movement, there are also skills training seminars given to enhance key women's training, organizing and other skills. Workshops are also held in management and communication skills. The latter include radio program materials produc-

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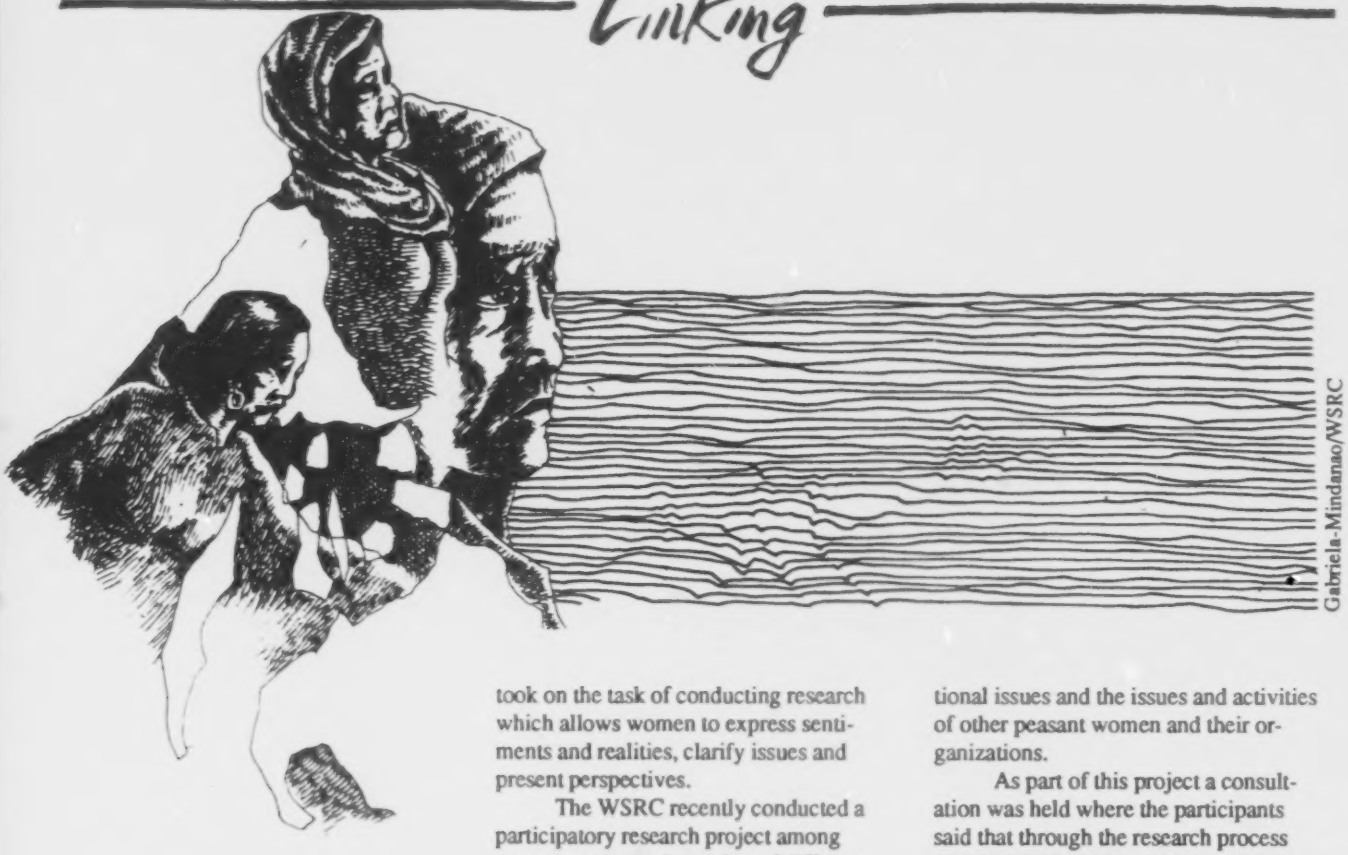

Gabriela-Mindanao/WSRC

tion, low-cost visuals production, song composition and production, basic writing, speakers' training and project development.

There are occasions when women's groups have to be provided with learning opportunities for the development of livelihood skills, enabling participants to engage, for example, in income-generating activities. However, much has to be done in curriculum development for this type of training.

As more and more lessons were gathered from the seminars and training workshops it became clear there was a need for an in-depth investigation of the conditions of women in different sectors. Participatory research was again discussed as an effective way of getting to know women from the different groups or classes. As women organizers expresssed a sense of inadequacy in artieulating specific issues of particular women's groups or classes, the WSRC took on the task of conducting research which allows women to express sentiments and realities, clarify issues and present perspectives.

The WSRC recently conducted a participatory research project among peasant women. A number of different issues were explored, including self-discovery as women--women's history of oppression and exploitation and their individual life-histories of oppression and exploitation, as well as knowledge of their rights and responsibilites as women. Skills in research, feasibility studies, and organizing were discussed, as well as national issues and the issues and activities of other peasant women and their organizations.

As part of this project a consultation was held where the participants said that through the research process they had gained a lot of knowledge that they had not realized would come from themselves. They felt that it had been proven that women with little or no formal education could do research work as long as they were aware of whom and what the research was for. The women called for the launching of research

Gabriela-Mindanao/WSRC

among peasant women and became directly involved in the formulation of the research design and other aspects of the implementation. During the last day of the consultation, they prepared a detailed action plan.

The consultation itself was an educational activity. And the participants said that the overall research project had helped increase peasant women's knowledge of organizing themselves, their rights and responsibilities, research as a scientific tool in identifying problems and solutions, and in identifying potential members and leaders of their organizations. They also learned skills in functional mathematics, such as how to compute income and expenses, skills in communication through creative representations and symbols, and skills in facilitating and public speaking through attending congresses, and conferences and representing their sectors in these activities. Bringing needs and resources together and handling marital problems and decision-making in the family were other areas where the research project benefitted them.

When asked about the project and its relation to social change, the comments of the women included "I realized the need to develop other women leaders," "The love between my husband and I developed," "The parish priest who handles the family apostolate work made me choose my priorities--my women's organization or the church work. I chose the former, but I recognize the importance of the latter and I will do this shift gradually to balance out the effects," "The police got suspicious. We were the subject of intrigues, but we handled this and evened out with them."

WSRC

In the main the WSRC attempts to use formal and informal ways of developing different aspects of participatory research. It is seen as part of a total educational experience which serves to determine women's specific problems and needs, increase their awareness of the problems and develop their commitment to solutions within their ranks and their community. Action programs are the concrete expressions of the steps towards the solution of these problems.

The WSRC research team, which includes the peasant women themselves, were able to build a network of women which now form the nucleus of the six peasant women organizations in Mindanao. The same process is now happening with a study of women workers. Although the method is different from that with the peasant women, the seeds for organizing women workers were also sown with the launching of the research project.

The success of these projects reflects the high level of coordination between the WSRC and other women's groups in the island. The WSRC works closely with the women's movement, particularly with GABRIELA, the coalition of progressive women's groups, and with WATCH (Women's Alliance for True Change) the multi-sectoral women's mass organization which works to build the nationalist and democratic struggle of the women of Mindanao.

WSRC's research and educational work and the conditions and struggles of women in Mindanao are discussed in the Center's quarterly publication *Womenews*, which is available from the address below:

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Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach

by Patricia Maguire

Center for International Education, University of Massachusetts, 1987, 305pp.

Review by E.A. (Nora) Cebotarev
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Guelph
Ontario, Canada

Pat Maguire's excellent book offers perhaps the first thorough and complete feminist scrutiny of Participatory Research (PR). The appeal and value of the book will not, however, be limited to a feminist readership. Professional adult educators, graduate students wishing to include PR in their studies, teachers and promoters of PR in institutional settings, community leaders and activists will all find valuable information and analysis in its pages. Written in a clear, personal and straight-forward style, it is a book for all those who see the primary aim of adult education as enabling women and men to better understand the workings of their society, as granting them a measure of control over their lives and empowering them towards the creation of a more just and humane future.

Defining participatory research as "a systematic approach to personal and social transformation", Maguire assesses its advantages and limitations on various levels and offers feminist guidelines for its improvement. Those interested in the conceptual underpinnings of PR will find early in the book a critical analysis of the assumptions and methodological requirements informing the main and the alternative social science paradigms and how they are translated into PR. Participatory research, no less than its parent theories, is inherently androcentric and male-dominated, having little room for more than cursory treatments of women's concerns and issues. The multiplicity of social knowledge types, the hierarchical ordering of "knowers" and their means of domination are related to feminist issues and discussed with a sophisticated understanding of the political nature of all research.

Maguire's analysis and feminist evaluation of the PR approach are illustrated throughout by her rich, personal experiences and candid reflections as a graduate student, researcher, and activist. She develops a participatory research model modified by feminist considerations, and describes the process of its conceptualization in a university setting to its practical application in work with a group of battered, poor women. (Documents and field instruments are included in the book's appendices.)

Many practical and ethical issues and contradictions emerging in PR work are candidly addressed. For example, how to convert a PR problem into an "acceptable" thesis? What real meaning does "research" have for women who have to fend for themselves and for their children on a daily basis? How can a feminist perspective become an integral part of PR? What roles can men play in a feminist, women-centred PR project?

Maguire feels strongly (and I agree with her) that PR needs to broaden its framework in order to genuinely serve oppressed men and women. The question of how to attain this transformation is addressed in Maguire's final four recommendations to participatory research practitioners: education about feminist theory and practice, the expansion of dialogue amongst participatory researchers to include the feminist research community, the inclusion of women's PR projects in publications and case studies, and the practice and testing of the feminist PR framework in planning, implementation and evaluation of projects. □

This book is available for US$8.80 from:

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Woman Speak!

Caribbean Women Making History and Making Change

Review by Linzi Manicom, Women's Program.

> *"Once upon a time great men conquered the earth through the submission of once great people. That was history, we were taught, and the recording of history was the 'official story' of these events.*
>
> More recently the power to record history has been claimed by new voices telling us that history is our common wealth and not the province of empires. It can be taken back. These voices come, incredibly, from the silhouetes, the silenced men, women and children whose labour, their testimony tell us, was not their passive response to the directives of evil men, but the active shaping of a landscape, a hope beyond the most brutal reality.
>
> *From the editorial of Woman Speak! No.23*

"Making Our History Making Change" is the title of the April 1988 issue of *Woman Speak!* the magazine of the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies. The issue is a series of reports and reflections on aspects of a seminar of the same title which took place in Barbados in October 1987, sponsored jointly by WAND and CAFRA (the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action).

The central objective of the seminar was the exchange of information about research being done in different parts of the Caribbean on women's historical role in social movements and organizations. A shared assumption of such research is its integral link to social activism. Research should, therefore, be popularly accessible and widely disseminated amongst women. A major focus of the seminar was to explore the creative and diverse ways in which women's history can be represented and communicated to a broad audience. This methodological aspect will be of particular interest to feminist popular educators in other parts of the world.

The first article is an account by a Guyanese woman of the way in which an initial idea to mount an exhibition on 'women and work' developed into a number of projects. One of these was Red Thread, a women's income-generating embroidery project. Another was a recording of the life histories of sugar workers, produced as a slide presentation. Danuta, the narrator, describes in some detail the process of learning that she, as researcher, underwent as she came to select women as subjects for interviewing, as she managed the actual mechanics of the interview sessions and grappled to understand the lives of the sugarworkers.

Another article discusses the process of transforming the information in Rhoda Reddock's book on women, labour and struggle in twentieth century Trinidad and Tobago into an exhibition that would capture and convey to viewers the central themes of that history--that women worked inside and outside the home, that they were aware of their exploitative conditions and they were organizing and struggling to improve them. How to select and represent the most salient historical facts? To what audience? How to make it interesting? How to capture the complexity of lives and social relations? In posing these and other questions and collectively working through them, the producers of the exhibition found themselves re-thinking their own historical location in the light of the lives and struggles of women in an earlier time.

A final example from *Woman Speak!* of the educative and mobilizing power of the study of women's historical role is a portrayal, by Sistren member Pauline Crawford, of the middle-class Jamaican woman reformist, Amy Bailey. According to the review, Pauline's characterization of the historical figure of Amy "brings alive the impact of black middle strata women in modern Caribbean society. The piece brings home forcefully the cruel contradiction between their tireless advocacy of women's emancipation and their advancement of the domestication of working class women."

These and many other interesting items in the issue suggest exciting developments in educational methodology that move well beyond the narrow form of written history.

A full report of the seminar is available from CAFRA and *Woman Speak!* is published three times a year by WAND. □

WAND,
Extra Mural Dept.
UWI
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Barbados

CAFRA Secretariat
P.O. Bag 442
Tunapuna P.O.
Trinidad and Tobago

Straight Stitching

Photo: Lisa Sakulensky/ILGWU, Ontario

Review by Rhonda Payne

Straight Stitching *is a play that was created with members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). It was commissioned in 1987 by the Mayworks Festival in Toronto, Canada. The play was scripted by Shirley Barrie and directed by Lib Spry, with original music composed by Arlene Mantle. The cast of the premiere performance of the play featured members of the ILGWU and professional actors.*

Early in 1987, Susan Ditta, coordinator of the Mayworks Festival, approached Lib Spry to mount a theatre project with members of the ILGWU. Mayworks is a Toronto Arts Festival designed to bring together workers in the arts and organized labour to create a series of visual and performing arts events. 1986 had witnessed the first strike in the garment industry since 1931. Alexandra Dagg, education officer for the ILGWU, and Susan Ditta agreed the strike would provide fertile ground for the creation of a play to be featured in this the second annual festival of Labour and Arts.

The union put out a call to their membership and a group of women from the shop floors who were keen to participate responded. The majority of workers in the garment industry in Canada are immigrant women. The participants in *Straight Stitching* reflected this reality: they included Jamaican, Filipino, Chinese, Greek, Portuguese, Polish, British and Canadian-born women.

For six weeks, Lib Spry and Shirley Barrie met with the women. Lib had trained with Augusto Boal, an Argentinian who developed a philosophical and practical approach to the use of theatre as a means of participatory analysis. "Theatre of the Oppressed" uses popular education techniques like sculpturing and image building to get people to demonstrate the power relationships in their lives. However Lib discovered that the garment workers weren't interested in those techniques. Rather they preferred to talk, relating stories of their own experiences working in the factories. Elsa Bandoles joined the group because she wanted to tell people what happens in a factory. "I wanted to tell everybody that piecework is hard. (It's when you're paid by the quantity of what you produce rather than the time you put in.) I thought the play might help other workers to fight for their rights. Together we might be able to change our working conditions."

The women shared their personal experiences, talking about the hopes and the difficulties of being an immigrant, a garment worker, and a working woman with family responsibilities. Very quickly, certain patterns emerged from the stories: many of them did not speak English when they started work, so communication is a real problem. New workers are generally harassed by supervisors and their fellow workers. Women of colour have to deal with racism.

For Adris Moulton, participating in *Straight Stitching* was an opportunity to tell her own story. "These are things that happened to me. They happened in the past and I dealt with them, so I can talk about them now. I wanted to let other people know what is really going on." The character of Frenchie, the shop steward, is based on Adris. At one point she tells her story of when she started working in the factory, "When I started in this business, I was the only black in the factory. Some terrible things were said to me. And I had problems with my machine. I would find the thread gone. So I went to the women who works next to me and I said, 'Listen good. I'm going to make your life a misery if you don't tell me who is doing these things to my machine.' So she told me. I went and picked up the screwdriver that I used for fixing my machine and I went to the woman who was doing these things. I lifted her up out of her place and I laid her back over the cutting table. I put the

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screwdriver to her throat and I said, 'You mess with my machine one more time and this screwdriver isn't coming out dry' After that me and that woman, we became very good friends."

Shirley and Lib produced a basic outline for the play which incorporated the stories they were hearing. The outline was presented to the garment workers who helped develop the storyline further. Some of their stories were used in their original narrative form and others were synthesized and fictionalized. One of the most important elements was that the play would reflect the pride the women took in their own skills. Says Lib, "When members of the general public think about garment factories, they think about the image of sweat shops. There's a certain amount of truth in that because piece work is really hard work. You do the same thing over and over again. But there's a real pride in the knowledge that what they do requires real skill."

The play focusses on a young Chinese immigrant who finds a job in a garment factory soon after her arrival in Canada. The problem of communication for a non-English speaker was dealt with by employing an acting technique known as "gobbledygook". The Chinese woman speaks in English so that the audience understands her dilemma. The English-speaking supervisor talks a nonsense language to illustrate her lack of sensitivity to the newcomer's confusion.

While the play illustrates some of the tensions between workers, it also reflects the solidarity that develops on the shop floor. For Maria Vrantsi, a staff person with the union who participated in the process, this was an important element in the play. "We wanted to show that we are people with feelings and rights. We want the manufacturers to treat us like intelligent people. We proved that we can make friends and stick together regardless of race or nationality."

This feeling of solidarity was very much a part of the working environment of the project. Four of the garment workers elected to perform in the play. None of them had performed before. Phillipa Hadju described the experience, "At first I was sitting there on the stage and I was so scared. Then all of a sudden I became aware of the energy. It started in my toes and it came up and up through my whole body till I felt as if I could just do anything." The four of us who make a living as actors were brought in to play supportive roles. We are all popular theatre workers: that is workers in a theatre which is generated out of the struggles, achievements and life experiences of working people. For the audiences who saw the play there was no distinction between ILGWU members and the other performers.

The highlights of this project were found in the process: the sharing of personal and working experiences between theatre workers and garment workers, the building of trust, and the exchange of information and skills. The rewards are to be found in the resonance with audience members when the reality of their own life is reflected on the stage. The drawbacks were, as is so often the case, attributable to underfunding. This put a real pressure on the producers to put the show together very fast, without adequate rehearsal time or the proper support services.

Straight Stitching speaks for and to a non-traditional theatre audience. Part of the script is being used by an teacher of English-as-a-Second Language in her classes with immigrant women. The producers would like more working people to see it. Plans for the future of the project include the possibility of touring to labour halls, training centres, women's groups and schools. □

ILGWU, Ontario Region

For more information please contact:

ILGWU
33 Cecil Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 1N1

Rhonda Payne has worked for 13 years as a creator and animator of popular theatre projects in Canada and in Africa. She is a former Artistic Director of the Mummers Troupe in Newfoundland. She was an original cast member of Straight Stitching.

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Malaysia

I was thrilled to read about the Women's Program. Like you, I am in the women's program, mainly with the longhouse women (an indigenous people) in Malaysia. I find *Voices Rising* extremely useful and encouraging for my work. I started my involvement with the women's program just over a year ago and we are now in the process of working out an entry-point program on functional literacy with the longhouse women. Being a woman from another race and ethnicity, with a totally different background from the longhouse women, my task is extremely challenging and at many instances, lonely. Nevertheless, after reading your bulletin, I felt much encouraged by the experiences, courage and determination of other sisters in the struggle.

As part of our consciousness-raising and documentation, I am planning to make a videotape on the longhouse women--focussing on their roles and position as well as their contribution to the longhouse community. I intend to use the tape to stimulate discussion among the longhouse women so that they are aware of their power in confronting issues affecting real development of their community--such as logging and loss of land rights.

As I am also developing an appropriate methodology for my work with the longhouse women, I hope you would let me know more about the work of the international participatory research network. I would like to know if this network provides any training opportunities for grassroots organizers.

Thank you for introducing *Voices Rising* to us. Hope we have more contact in the future. All the very best.

A friend in Malaysia

Ecuador

Our centre is a non-profit organization. We develop educational material, gather research and classify information, on labour history and working conditions in the countryside and the cities. Our work is with workers, peasants and indigenous people.

Through our work in the educational field, we realized the importance of addressing the situation of indigenous women who are being ignored. As a first step, we began to develop educational material reflecting on their condition and providing a critical analysis. We are now working with women in indigenous communities, focusing on their rights, on the importance of their organization as women, and on the problems they confront in their communities. This is a very difficult task because most of the women only speak their native language and very little Spanish. We are trying to determine which material is appropriate for our work. We have tried different forms, such as audiovisuals, and drawings. So far results are promising, though we need more time to evaluate these experiences.

We think it would be very useful to exchange views and experiences about our work with the Women's Program, to share knowledge, problems and solutions. *Voices Rising* sums up many of the difficulties confronted by groups working with women. We hope you will continue sending us your materials and more informally, information on different experiences.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Sincere regards

Gloria Campos
Resource and Information Centre of the Social Movements of Ecuador
Apartado 18-C
Quito
Ecuador

Uganda

Our major role at the Uganda Restoration Effort is to motivate, animate, mobilize and involve under-privileged sections of the Ugandan population (particularly those victimized through many years of war) into action for recovery and advancement.

It follows therefore that the resources (newsletters, journals, training materials and support) we need are those that enable us to prepare the involved communities for the tasks and responsibilities relating to this critical period of social and material recovery in the history of our country.

A bigger fraction of the target community in our women's community are widows, which necessitates on our part the designing and implementation of specialized project work to enable these women to shoulder greater responsibilities than in normal times. We are spending a sizeable percentage of our meagre resources on skills and capital equipment in the fields of Appropriate Village Level Technology, Primary Health Care, Agricultural Modernization, and the provision, on a rural self-help basis, of hygienic water and basic sanitation facilities....plus of course the leadership and managerial skills required to turn designed projects from concepts to realities. These activities have an in-built educational component manifested through the Literacy Scheme attached to the work.

Our main partner organizations include the government, the churches,

Makerere University, UN agencies working in the country, local development agencies and a cross-section of home industry. On the local women's front we have very healthy ties with the National Council of Women, the Women's Department of the National Resistance Movement Secretariat and the Uganda Women's Efforts to Save Orphans. Recently, we undertook a field review of our women's work in the countryside with the participation of the Associated Countrywomen of the World.

We hope our ties will grow and strengthen, and offer you our kind regards and best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph Kagimu
Director
Uganda Restoration Effort
P.O. Box 31255 Kampala
Uganda

Chile

First, I would like to ask you to send me *Voices Rising* regularly. Its contents have been very useful for our organization--the Centre for Women's Studies (CEM). Soon we will be able to send our contribution. We have been working during the last two years on a research project on organizational experiences of women in the urban popular sector concerning family consumption and survival.

We would like to let you know that we have just begun working with urban popular sectors on a project supporting women's experiences in production. We want to address an issue that unfortunately has not been given importance, though it is one of the main causes for the limited success of production projects or *income generating* projects. We are talking about the need to give women's groups and organizations the tools to allow them to develop a reflection process around women's internalized ideology of their economic activity, which tends to underestimate and subordinate their labour to the traditional roles assigned by the dominant culture.

Through our own practice and learning, we have been able to see that women continue to rate their economic contribution to the family as "secondary", "temporary" or as "help" to the income of the head of the family (even when he is permanently unemployed, as is common in our countries.) We believe that any policy or program aimed at encouraging production activities among women, to enable them to equally join the development process and to improve their lives, has no chance of success under these conditions.

In reaching this conclusion, we're not in any way blaming the women participating in the production projects for their lack of success. The view thatwomen's work is subordinate and secondary--whether or not it is remunerated-- cannot be considered the exclusive responsibility of those participating in this kind of collective experience. This view is shared by agencies financing these programs, the organizations designing the projects and those who conduct them.

To illustrate this, we can compare the amount and the goals of investment in two kinds of production projects: production units for men (usually characterized as "small business") and those for women (usually defined as "shops".) We can also differentiate between the projects for the two social sectors. In the first case they are "development" projects, oriented towards the creation of "production units" integrated into the

market. On the other hand, projects for women are usually oriented towards "survival" and family consumption--in other words, to generate some, uncertain income to contribute to a shaky balance or to fill gaps in the fragile family budget.

We are still far from having reached conclusions on this issue. Our goal is to identify aspects that will help us reflect on our own orientation, practice and commitment with less advantaged women in our society.

Our best regards. Once more, we would like to emphasize the important contribution of *Voices Rising* in the search for a more just and equal future for half of humanity.

Ana María Orteaga
Sociologist
Centre for Women's Studies (CEM)
Purisima 353
Santiago
Chile

This letters section is a new idea and one that we hope will be a regular feature of Voices Rising. We've included just a small selection of the many interesting letters that come to the program office. We hope that these pages can be a place for women in the network to share your experiences and concerns. Where possible, we'l print names ans addresses so that people can write to each other. Keep in touch! It's great to hear from you!

People's Education in South Africa--New Resources

The popular struggle around education has been a central component of the anti-apartheid resistance movement in South Africa since the Soweto Uprising in 1976. The continuing crisis in schooling for the oppressed black people led to the formation, in 1985, of the National Education Crisis Committee, a broad organization of constituencies concerned with education--students, teachers, parents and community activists. The concept of People's Education was born in this context.

People's Education, as it is being elaborated and developed, shares many aspects with what in other parts of the world is called popular education. The building of democratic organization, the unleashing and stimulating of critical and creative thinking and action, and the development of skills and capacities that empower communities to bring about social change are all embodied in the conception of People's Education. Control of education by the popular classes to serves their interests is another central principle. People's Education is very clearly situated within the non-racial democratic opposition movement in South Africa, and is aimed at building "People's Power" and developing education for the future liberated South Africa.

Although the idea of People's Education originated in the struggle around schooling, it is intended to embrace all forms of education--in communities, literacy projects, in the labour movement, in post-secondary education. People's Education Commissions comprising progressive educators from the communities and universities have been established to develop resources and methodologies for education in fields such as Math, English and History and to elaborate education policy.

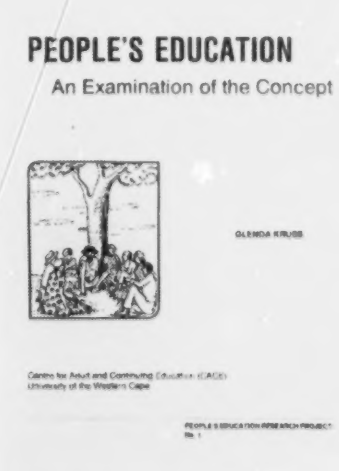
Most of the leadership of the National Education Crisis Committee have been detained during the prolonged "States of Emergency" imposed by the repressive South African government over the past two years. In February of 1988 the activities of the NECC itself were restricted. Any activities perceived as People's Education have been banned from the state schools. These measures will not readily crush the vision of People's Education.

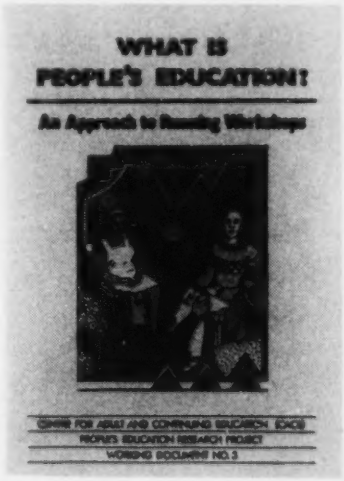
The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa has undertaken a research project on People's Education to contribute to its development, in theory and practice. The Centre (CACE) has issued a number of booklets which will interest those who want to find out more about the education struggle in South Africa. These include: *People's Education in South Africa. An Examination of the Concept*, and *People's Education. A Collection of Articles from December 1985 to May 1987.*

One of these booklets--*What is People's Education? An Approach to Running Workshops*--has wider application and will be useful to a more general readership. It is a clear and straightforward guide to the organizing of workshops--in this case workshops oriented around exploring the meaning of People's Education. The approach sets out a number of basic questions that need to be addressed when planning and running a workshop, with suggestions and examples of the kinds of issues to be considered. The booklet will be of particular value to those working with community educators.

What is People's Education? and the other booklets about "People's Education" can be obtained from:

Centre for Adult and Continuing Education,
University of the Western Cape,
Private Bag X17,
Bellville 7535,
South Africa. □





Resources

ATRWC Update

ATRWC is the newsletter of the African Training and Research Centre for Women on women and development. It contains useful reports of conferences, papers and development strategies, and information about upcoming meetings, publications and research activities. The most recent issue, No.10, June 1988, gives prominence to the topic of Women and Health.

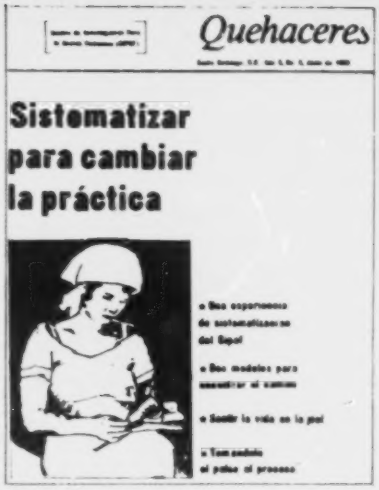
Available: free on request from: ECA/ATRWC, PO Box 3001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Cafra News

CAFRA News

CAFRA, the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action, is "an organization of feminist researchers and activists committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of exploitation in the society and who are working actively to change this situation." The most recent issue of the newsletter, Vol.2, No.2, June 1988, includes updates on a number of CAFRA research projects, reports on International Women's Day activities in the region and information or reports about conferences, meetings, scholarships and publications. In a stimulating discussion in the section entitles "CAFRA Opinion", Honor Ford-Smith raises some critical questions about the mode and aims of feminist organizing in the present Caribbean context where women and their organizations are facing the effects of the economic crisis.

***Subscription:** US$15.00 (4 issues/year)*
***Available from:** CAFRA, PO Bag 442, Tunapuna Post Office, Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago.*



Quehaceres

The Research Centre for Women's Action (CIPAF) in the Dominican Republic, publishes *Quehaceres*, their monthly bulletin (in Spanish), as a supplement to a national newspaper. Each issue features articles on a theme, and recent examples included patriarchy, Free Trade Zones, and women and religion. The theme of the June 1988 issue is "Systematization in order to change our practice." The introduction says that systematization, or evaluation, is reflection on practice, with the aim of providing a basis for developing theory about popular education. Popular organizations often dismiss systematization. Instead, they either follow theories which come from above, or reject theory in favour of an emphasis on practice, so that practice becomes an end in itself.

The articles in *Quehaceres* don't attempt to theorize systematization but rather describe different ways it can be done, including: the testimonies of two women from CIPAF's educational team about their systematization work with a rural women's leadership-training project; a review of the approaches to systematization developed by key popular education institutes in Latin America, and a report on a course in systematization.

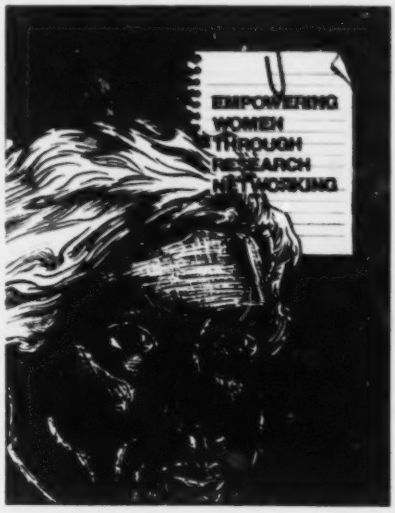
***Available from:** CIPAF, Apdo Postal 1744, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.*

Empowering Women Through Research Networking

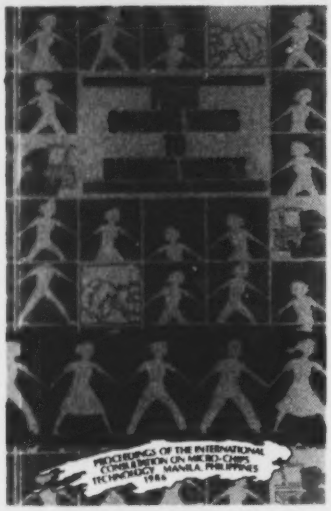
Center for Women's Resources, Philippines, 1988. 58pp.

This is a report of a conference held in the Philippines in September 1987 aimed at beginning a process of dialogue and sharing between Philippina researchers in academic settings and organizers in communities, so that the knowledge generated in both settings could be better shared. Women academics shared their different experiences, and the organizers validated them and raised questions of their own. Through a series of articles authored by the participants, the report discusses different dimensions of research, such as the research process and funding, and several alternative approaches to research including, feminist, participatory, and historical research.

Available from: Center for Women's Resources, 43 Roces Avenue, 2nd floor, Mar Santos Bldg., Quezon City, Philippines.



Resources



From Bonding Wires to Banding Women: Proceedings of the International Consultation on Micro-Chip Technology, Manila, Philippines, 1986

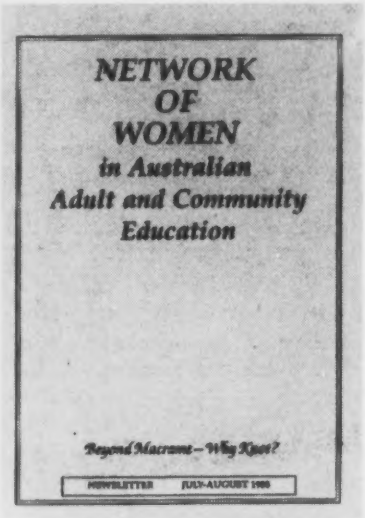
Co-published by the Center for Women's Resources and the Participatory Research Group, 1988, 67pp.

This book documents the highlights of a meeting in Manila co-sponsored by the Center for Women's Resources, the Women's Center and the Kilusan Manggagawang Kababaihan-KMK (Women Workers' Movement) all based in Manila, and the ICAE Women's Program and the Participatory Research Group in Toronto. The meeting brought together 40 women--educators, organizers and workers from 12 countries--to share experiences, problems and strategies concerning the impact of micro-chip technology on the lives of women workers. The book includes testimonies of women workers and activists from factories in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and offices in Canada and the US, as well as analyses of the global context, local strategies for fighting back and regional and international networking.

Cost: Cdn$5.00

In Asia available from:
Center for Women's Resources,
43 Roces Avenue,
Quezon City, Philippines,

In other regions available from:
Participatory Research Group,
Suite 308, 394 Euclid Ave.,
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M6G 2S9.

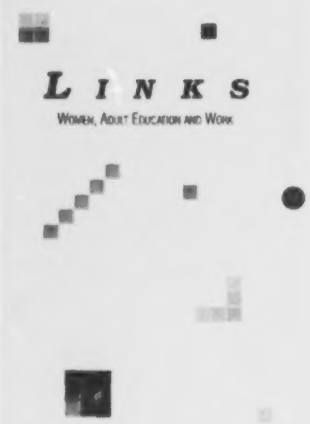


Network of Women in Australian Adult and Community Education Newsletter

This quarterly newsletter is part of a growing network of women in Australia aimed at informing practice in women's learning by fostering information exchange, research, publications and conferences.

Cost: Aus.$12.00 (includes membership in the network.)

Available from: Helen Gribble, c/o Council of Adult Education, 256 Flinders Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia.

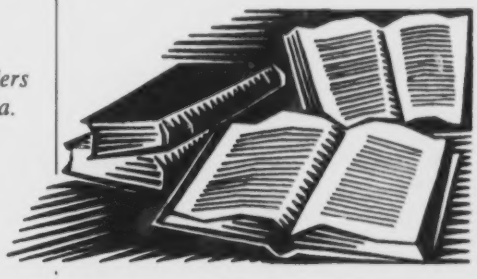


Links: Women, Adult Education and Work

Network of Women in Australian Adult and Community Education, Melbourne, 1988. 52pp.

This report outlines the results of a research project commissioned by the Network, on adult education and paid work for women in Australia. The research was initiated to support the view that women are a seriously under-utilised resource in the Australian economy, and the report will have practical value for women in educational programs and policy making.

Available from:
Network of Women in Australian Adult and Community Education,
256 Flinders Street,
Melbourne, Vic. 3000,
Australia.



Clifford Harper

Finding Our Own Way: More Women's Training Activities Worldwide

Newsletter 40, International Women's Tribune Centre, July 1988. 47pp.

This is the second of two special issues of the *Tribune Newsletter* which focus on participatory training issues and activities for women. It is based on a workshop which the IWTC coordinated in Montevideo, Uruguay, in August 1987 in which participants explored different approaches to participatory training and how it relates to feminism, women's organizing activities and gender issues. A guide to five specific participatory training activities is included.

***Cost:** US$6, free to people in the Third World.*

***Available from:** IWTC, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, U.S.A.*

NEW!

The Moon Also Has Its Own Light. The struggle to build a women's consciousness among Nicaraguan farm workers

ICAE Women's Program

Within the next few months, we will be publishing a case study of the Women's Program of the Nicaraguan Farm Worker's Union (ATC). The struggle for women's emancipation in Nicaragua is unique. Underdevelopment, years of war, and the urgent priorities of the revolution, all combine to create a context which might appear to put women's demands in second place. In reality, these are the very factors which force a confrontation with a series of contradictions; the double workload faced by women, their role within the union, the "machismo" so prevalent within Latin American society, and the direction of the Nicaraguan women's movement in general.

This publication will be the first in the Women's Program Case Study Series on approaches to women's education in different regions of the world. Jointly prepared by the ICAE Women's Program and the ATC Women's Secretariat, it focusses on how popular education has been used as a tool to promote discussion, increase consciousness of conditions particular to women, and promote women's leadership within the union. It also reflects on the effect this process has on the work and home life of agricultural workers and, in a broader sense, on the struggles of the Nicaraguan women's movement to keep women's emancipation in the forefront of the revolution.

Available: (forthcoming in English and Spanish)
ICAE Women's Program, Suite 308, 394 Euclid Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6G 2S9.

Women's Health Journal

The magazine of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, coordinated by Isis International.

A recent special edition of the journal is devoted to the Campaign on Maternal Mortality, an international campaign jointly coordinated by the Women's Global Network on Reproductive Rights and the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network. The campaign was launched on the International Day of Action for Women's Health, 28th May 1988. This issue contains articles on different aspects of maternal mortality from different national perspectives.

Along with a range of articles on different experiences in organizing women's health care, information about organizations and resources, the most recent issue No. 6-7, (March-June 1988) focusses on domestic violence. Issue No. 4-5. (November 1987-January 1988) contains an informative article on AIDS. The journal is published in both English and Spanish.

***Available from:** Isis International, Via San Saba 5, 00153 Rome, Italy.*

Women$hare Funding Newsnote

Issue No.1, International Women's Tribune Centre, July 1988. 8pp.

The *Funding Newsnote* was started so that women's groups could begin to share information relating to the broad area of "women and funding"--information about funders, issues related to funding for women's projects, and to begin a process of collectively developing strategies which will both increase the amount of funding available for all women's groups, and at the same time begin to broaden the scope of issues that the funding community will support. This first issue is intended as an introduction to the world of women's funds and contains information about foundations and grant programmes specifically for women and, in most instances, initiated by women. The *Newsnote* is an occasional bulletin produced in English, French and Spanish.

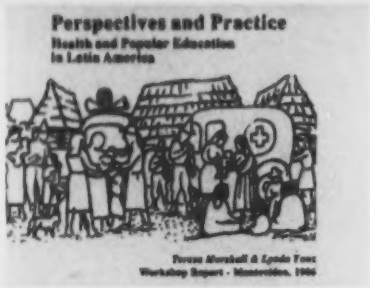
Cost: US$6 per subscription for the next three issues, free to people in the Third World.

Available from: IWTC, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA

Perspectives and Practice: Health and Popular Education in Latin America

Latin American Council for Adult Education, 1988. 69pp.

This is the report of a workshop held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in December 1986, which brought together more than 30 people working in community health and popular education in different parts of Latin America. The meeting was convened by the Latin American Council for Adult Education through its Health and Popular Education Network, to give health professionals and popular



educators the opportunity to explore and create popular alternatives for health care that would be capable of responding to the increasingly urgent local needs brought on by the deterioration of living conditions and the challenges of social and political change.

The report aims to capture the three intensive days of discussion during which participants worked to build a dialogue between curative and educational actions, find a balance between advocacy and demands for basic rights and services, and searched for ways to combine collective political work with personal development.

Available from: CEAAL, Diagonal Oriente 1604, Casilla 6257, Santiago 22, Chile.

Resource Kit for Pacific Women

Pacific Women's Resources Bureau, South Pacific Commission, Noumea, New Caledonia, 1988. 386pp.

This resource kit began as a project of the Pacific Women's Resource Bureau in 1985, in response to their assessment that very little information existed about women's organizations in the region. Complete with maps, the kit is organized into three parts, the first lists women's organizations, the second provides profiles of individual women in the Pacific, and the third provides information about sources of funding and technical assistance for women's groups and organizations. As a directory the kit can be used as a resource by people concerned with women and development in the Pacific and by women's groups seeking information on funding assistance.

Available from: Pacific Women's Resources Bureau, BP D5, Noumea CEDEX, New Caledonia, South Pacific.

Working with Women: A Community Development Handbook for Pacific Women

By Amelia Rokotuivuna, Handbook No. 29, South Pacific Commission, 1988. 87pp.

This useful book is aimed at helping women leaders, field workers, and officers of women's organizations to acquire some skills and understanding that will enable them to help women participate fully in the life of their communities. It contains explanations of important ideas on working with people, exercises to help raise awareness about, and increase the participation of communities in development activities, and suggestions on how to communicate better. The booklet is divided into five sections, each with their own exercises, on: community development and the community worker, understanding how other people think, understanding groups, understanding the position of women, and communication: getting the message across.

Available from: South Pacific Commission, Noumea, New Caledonia, South Pacific.

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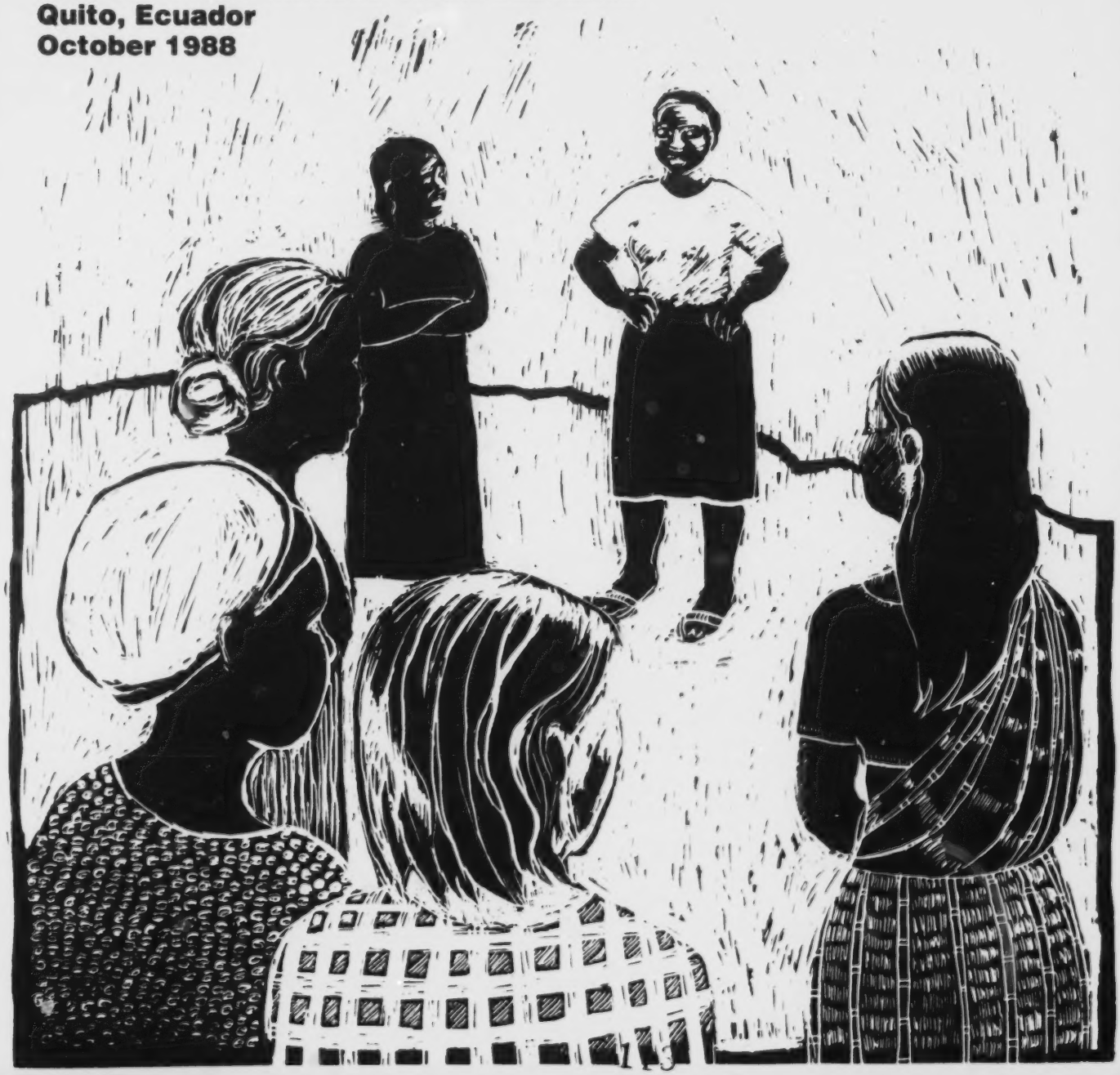
a bulletin about women and popular education

SPECIAL REPORT:

Building the Movement: A Women's Leadership Seminar in International Adult Education
Quito, Ecuador
October 1988



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Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, and aims to: promote the sharing of experiences, provide a forum for debate and discussion of key issues for women educators, share information on useful resources, and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face in their daily lives.

We welcome letters or short articles on your work and experiences. Through your contributions and involvement we can deepen our understanding and develop more effective strategies for action.

The ICAE's Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and empowerment of women.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is an international non-governmental organization with national member associations in over 90 countries, and networks in a variety of areas, including : peace, literacy, community health and popular education, worker's education, and participatory research as well as the Women's Program. All networks are decentralized and coordinated by individuals and groups in different regions of the world.

The Women's program is coordinated from Canada by the Participatory Research Group (PRG) working in collaboration with key contacts from various regions. PRG is a popular educationa and research collective.

The following agencies provided support to "Building the Movement" the leadership development seminar in Quito, and to this issue of *Voices Rising*: Agricultural Missions, USA; UNIFEM SIDA Women & Development; Unicef-Colombial Partnership Africa Canada; Anglican Church of Canada; CIDA-INGO; United Church of Canada.

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Building Leadership, Building the Movement *

SPECIAL REPORT

The main focus of this issue of Voices Rising is "Building the Movement: A Women's Leadership Seminar in International Adult Education" which was jointly organized by the ICAE Women's Program and the Women's Network of CEAAL--the Latin American Council for Adult Education--and took place last October in Quito, Ecuador. This special report is made up of the words and reflections of participants on the central themes of the seminar. They are woven together, not to present one voice or viewpoint, but rather to reflect the strength and creativity generated when committed activists and educators come together to share, enjoy and learn from one another. The meeting left us invigorated with new ideas and a sense of great possibilities.

"If an international network is to be any use it must serve the efforts of local organizing and set its agenda in terms of the needs and priorities emerging from that base."

These words by Lean Heng set the stage for five days of intensive work in Quito. Through the week we struggled from different entry points through a maze of issues, considering ways in which that vision might be transformed into concrete actions. This was not an easy task for it involved so many different people, contexts and perspectives.

The seminar had been titled "leadership development". It proved, in fact, to be much more than that. It was about learning from each other, about affirming the basis of our movement, about evaluating forms of leadership amongst women, and strategies for developing the leadership of women in relation to the broader movement for adult education.

Building on the momentum of our first international seminar in Montreal in 1987, the ICAE Women's Program wanted to bring together some of the groups and individuals from different regions with whom we've been working most closely over the last few years. The idea was to consolidate the involvement of these key regional contacts in the leadership and activities of the Program and to get a better picture of the links and gaps between women's popular education initiatives and the official structures of adult education in different regions. We also hoped to take up and advance our discussions of some of the central issues identified at that earlier meeting.

Quito, Ecuador was chosen as the venue for the seminar partly because it is the base for the CEAAL Women's Network, the strongest regional network within our international network. Participants were keen to learn from the experience of different groups involved in popular education in Latin America. The women who came brought with them their experience from a wide range of organizations--from popular education groups, women's centres, and national and regional adult education institutions. They combined many decades of experience working at the grassroots level in very different national contexts--with Palestinian women in Lebanon, with homeless women in Bombay, against repressive government conditions in Malaysia, Chile and South Africa. Many have played active roles in the women's and education movement in their countries and their regions; some brought substantial international experience.

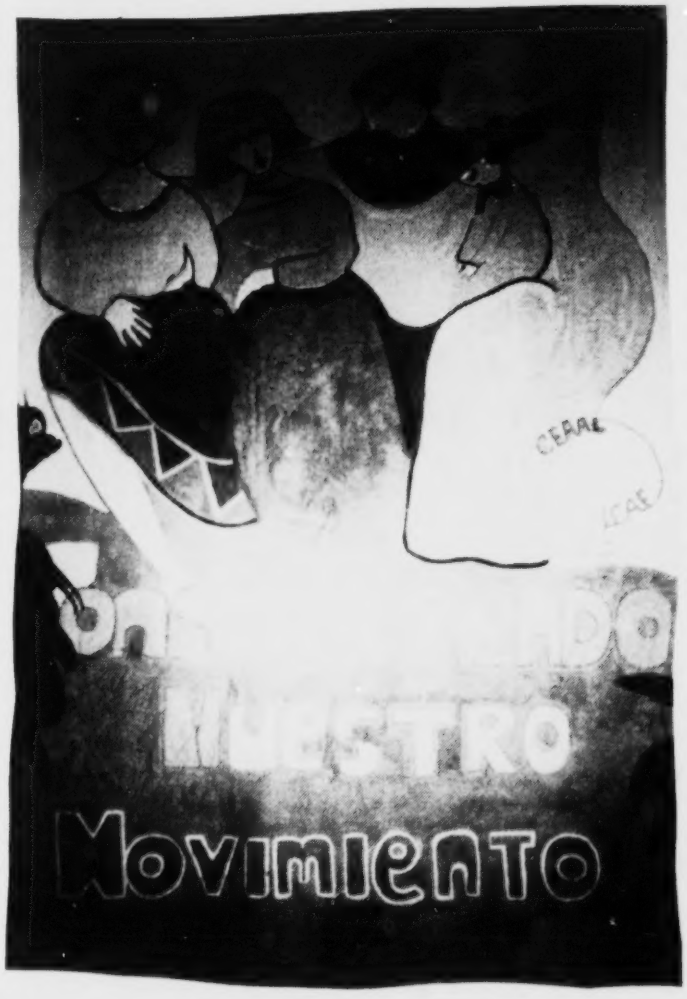
The Quito program spanned a number of objectives. There were opportunities for sharing and dis-

* This section was compiled by Lynda Yanz, based on many, many hours of translation/transcription by Heather Chetwynd and Anibal Viton of tapes from the seminar.

cussion with women's groups in Ecuador (through two days of visits, two public panel discussions and cultural events). There was organized discussion of three central themes--Our Identity: Feminist and Popular Education; Challenges for Building Democratic Organizations; and Building Leadership, Building the Movement. And there was time to plan action for the next steps in the Women's Program and ICAE.

The theme of leadership was woven throughout the seminar both in the formal discussions and in the informal exchanges as women worked together to confront the difficult issues involved in developing alternative forms of education and organization--issues which we've all had to face, with challenge and with pain, both personally and politically. The fruits of the week's hard work, of an intense process of learning to listen, and where necessary, to disagree with one another were evident by the Sunday morning when we began to put together the pieces and plans that had been building through the week. There had been times of frustration and despondency, when it seemed as though we weren't moving anywhere. But as the different groups began to inscribe the flip charts on the four walls of the meeting room with the summary products of their labours, we were able to see just how much we had achieved.

We approved a quite ambitious plan of work for the Women's Program, one involving most of the seminar participants in working groups around special new projects such as the preparation for the ICAE World Assembly, an international action research project, and an Asian training program. We drafted a letter to the ICAE President and Executive requesting their support for the Program and the setting up of international Task Force to strengthen the role of women in the international adult education movement. We requested that an organizational review of the Women's Program be undertaken in order to ensure the Program's accountability to its constituency and to develop a clearer organizational structure within the Program and between the ICAE and the Program.



Beyond these specific outcomes, much headway was made in terms of supporting and strengthening regional networks' own efforts as well as extending their involvement in the international network. This represented an important accomplishment, especially for those regions whose networks are still emerging.

There was much discussion about what kind of "international" work made most sense, and which did not. Participants talked concretely about the kinds of exchanges (of people and materials) that would strengthen local and regional efforts. As in Montreal we reaffirmed the importance of strengthening links with progressive education and women's struggles in North America and Europe, not merely for the useful support work that can be coordinated from the North, but because we want to link women's educational struggles internationally. The Women's Program should not be seen as a Third World network with its technical centre in Canada.

Another important, if less visible outcome, was the discussion about, and proposal for action relating to women's involvement in the adult education movement. The contexts of adult education (approaches, programs and structures) vary tremendously from region to region. No one analysis of the role of women in adult education can thus be established, and equally, there can be no one strategy for taking up women's issues effectively in the field. There was concern however that, where appropriate, regional women's networks continue to urge the integration of gender issues into all aspects of work. Certainly this strategy is currently well underway within the CEAAL Women's Network. At the international level, the seminar called on the ICAE Executive to support the Women's Program's efforts to link women popular educators.

Our identity:
Feminism and Popular Education
Beginning an International Discussion

The seminar opened with a session entitled "Our Identity". Organizers had assumed this would be a fairly straightforward naming of our common reference points in feminism and popular education as a way of moving on to discussions of other themes. We quickly discovered however, that we didn't necessarily share the same perspectives on educational practice or women's organizing. We learned how important it was not to assume a single or unified position at the outset of an encounter, but rather to allow ourselves to develop a unity through the sharing of concrete examples of the salient questions and priorities from our local realities. From that base (the building of which takes listening and re-thinking our own practical and theoretical constructs), there can be a more careful and productive shift to the international perspective. Identifying, clarifying and working towards a mutual understanding of the issues in a more grounded way provided a better, more realistic basis for our program and for the planning of action.

We started this meeting by attempting to base ourselves in our regional particularities, our different experiences. We heard about the present situation from Nicaragua, the impact of political processes in Asia and the role of popular educators, of how they manage themselves vis a vis the situation of the party position where there is not great identification with these political parties. We returned to the African situation and heard about the weight of traditions, religion, and in some cases the great fear of politics where important sectors do not want to think about what is happening or reflect upon situations that will not have an immediate effect upon their lives. This is the great subject of survival, the struggle for survival.

Afterwards we debated and shared different strategies for work with women, how these have developed from work in India, in Peru, in Mali. We shared similar experiences in Africa and Latin America, of attempting to provide small quotas of power, or experiences in power to women's groups. We concluded by recognizing that in these strategies what is important is a process of awareness of the women, a discussion of the problems.

In each of these the important role of education kept coming up, without using many adjectives to name it. Depending on the political and social context, different elements are taken into this work (literacy, productive work, popular kitchens, etc.) although, within our multiplicity of experiences, it seems there is always the possibility of raising the demands around survival and the gender issue, of being creative in this respect.

(Teresa, Chile)

In some contexts the terms feminism and popular education don't mean anything. What we are trying to do is not so much come to a common definition but to explore whether there is a common identity in terms of our approach to education and working for women, if and how there is a basis of unity for an international network. The challenge is to recognize and deal constructively with the genuine differences between us, and also to recognize that unity does not require that we be identical to one another. We do not have to become one in order to work together... What are the differences? What can we learn from one another? How do we want to work together?

(Lynda, Canada)

How are we incorporating this perspective of women in the building of popular education which reflects the complexities of our reality and which advances the democratization process in our countries. What I'm concerned about is this theme of an international perspective of popular

education, because I feel that popular education per se doesn't mean much. Popular education means something if it produces change in people's practice, and women specifically, and if these lead to changes in the content of popular education. I think this is perhaps the key point in reflecting on any research we carry out.

(Gina, Peru)

In Africa women go to jail . . . but there are other forms of prison as well. If I look at the face of a country like Sudan or even my country, we have a growing situation where women are veiled and maintained in a kind of prison. We haven't seen this for a long time and now it's coming very fast. And at the same time we are trying to develop into a modern society.

(Lalla, Mali)

At the beginning AMNLAE mainly focussed on calling upon women to become integrated into revolutionary tasks, and to take part in productive tasks, in military tasks, in defending the revolution. There was no discourse about gender. To speak of gender at that time was to be out of context. Or at least that's what we said about "special claims", that they were out of context, that the priority was to defend the revolution. But today we consider that truly, the defence of the revolution is the defence of ourselves as women. Our emancipation requires the political context of the revolution, but we also think that we cannot wait until the war is over to put forward our claims.

(Sylvia, Nicaragua)

First of all is the fact that we are Palestinians, and secondly, that we are women. As Palestinians we are committed, we are part of the Palestine National Liberation Movement. We belong to women's organizations in order to achieve our national rights: the right of returning to our country, the right to self-determination, the right to establish an independent territory. This is why we are organizing in Lebanon and have been since our exile. Also we are working as women so that we can become productive in this process, and take our place in the struggle, in our community, and become part of the political decision-making in our national liberation.

We see our participation in the Women's Program or any international network in this light. Thus what we require from you is not only in terms of our work with women and our leadership as women, but also you helping us in achieving our aspirations, our national pride. And at this juncture we, as Palestinians in exile, believe the main objective is to support the uprising.

(Leila, Lebanon)

It is somehow unavoidable, when we talk about a network, to make a comparison with fishermen. [Net and network are the same word in Spanish.] Quercum is a a Mapuche word I learned in Chile some time ago meaning "time of active waiting." It is what fishermen do when they can't go fishing, when the sea is stormy and doesn't allow fishing . . . so they gather, share experiences, talk about their decisions, the new things they've seen in the sea, and they repair their nets, hooks, boats . . . This meeting has reminded me of that--a small group with such different experiences, trying to weave a large net, to cover all the world.

(Beatriz, Brazil)

Five years ago I would quite likely have rejected an invitation to participate in an international seminar, thinking it had nothing to do with me, with my work. But now we find that if our local collectives are to survive, they need to network. City networks have to link with other cities and then this has to go on at a regional level. I have read about the process of organization in Latin America, and the kind of lessons that people have learned are really inspirational. It's like I'm taking one step at a time and finding that this kind of peer group process helpes me climb the steps I need to take.

(Sheela, India)

Because of the ways some individuals from regional and international groups have crossed our paths, it's built a lot of resistance in me. But in the last number of years in the intensive struggle and work that I've been engaged in, mainly with the women workers, through that work and coupled with the different readings and learning of experiences of people from other regions, it's brought me quite a different perspective. I think now that regional and international work, if it is done properly can help to support and further consolidate the work at the base. And that's what ultimately is the test of "networking", at whatever level.

(Lean, Malaysia)

We face an enormous contradiction in the U.S. We work with people who have serious problems in their everyday lives, economic problems, problems that women face in any other part of the world. And we educators/activists need to work to solve those problems. At the same time, because we are in the U.S., we have to understand how our work relates to what is going on in the rest of the world. The trick is that we always have to look with two eyes on what we're working at. The question for us is how we do in-depth organizing more on a local level and at the same time do educational work to build a sense of internationalism and connections to what is going on in the rest of the world.

(Sue, USA)

We have to look at the context of our work, and of the people we work with. All of us are affected by the international economic order, and the multinationals. And among the people we live and work with the crucial problem is survival, survival in terms of home, food, fuel, land. And repression, and occupation, whether it takes place in our factories, in occupied territories, or in the rural areas where in the Philippines there is currently a lot of militarization.

All us are working with both men and women, the landless, the workers. Although we have differences, we also come up with common issues . . . like the importance of consolidating grassroots organizations. The question is how do we use this network to build, to strengthen, to expand, to consolidate our existing grassroots organizations?

Of course there's also the need for solidarity, solidarity can come in the form of solidarity for the prisoners, and solidarity to support activist work.

(Carol, Philippines)

It seems that at the moment, the EBAE Women's Sub-Committee could help its sisters most of all in the following ways: that we exchange information with other regional organizations and national bodies on the nature of our work, its objectives and aims, recognizing both the similarities and the differences of our operating structures, and that we aid women's organizations in the other regions who are appealing for funding to agencies in terms of information, advice and, where necessary, representations to such funding agencies.

(Leny, England)

When the five-day International Seminar on Women's Leadership in Adult Education began, Quito, a sunny friendly city, welcomed a group of twenty women from all over the world, confident in creating new solidarity links and working guidelines to develop through thought and action the presence of the women's movement in the process of social transformation.

Women's Program coordinator, Lynda Yanz, inaugurated the event. Her words renewed the expectations of Ecuador women. She stressed the importance of the seminar's main theme: a reflection on women's leadership, on our experience as leaders, and on the responsibility and potential of this very political role, especially in the international context. It was only after that first day of introductions that I experienced of the full impact of the event. The women participating in the seminar came from all regions of the world: Arab countries, South and South-East Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America. I felt so at home with these relaxed, open, funny women who were all involved in actvities important for women all around the world. They were going to visit women's grassroots groups in Ecuador, something that was certain to have a profound effect, since it was the first time that such interchange and solidarity with leaders in adult education was to take place in our country.

The schedule included a program of visits to grassroots women's organizations to allow for a direct knowledge of their work towards social change, to share experiences and to build solidarity links. It was an intense and mobilizing experience for all of us. I think the Ecuadorean women reacted as one; we were amazed to know of the hardships of life in other contexts. We knew about apartheid, for example, but we could feel its extent through Shirley Walters' testimony, asking for solidarity with women imprisoned for struggling against legalized racism. Her words made us feel an unconditional sisterhood. The same thing happened when we listened to accounts of the forced displacements and repression against Palestinians on the West Bank, in Gaza and in Lebanon. The contrast with our Latin American reality was immense. It is true that we live in a crisis situation, marginalized, even in extreme poverty, but I now realize that we must value the fact that we have a place, a territory we can call motherland, that our heritage has been kept in books, in the arts and in our hearts.

Our guests visited organizations in three important cities of Ecuador, Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca; they also participated in a meeting at the "Maria Quilla" Centre, with representatives of women's organizations from different provinces in order to broaden discussion to the national level. After discussing the visits with several of our sisters I sensed a common feeling: the awareness of feminist issues as a worldwide issue, common to all women regardless of race, class, language, religion, culture or nationality. In this sense there is an universal category of gender, which legitimizes feminist theory as a social science and feminist leadership as an international political line of action.

Cecilia Miño Grijalva,
"Maria Quilla" Centre for Research and Action on Women's Conditions
(local hosts to the Quito Seminar)

Leadership and Women in International Adult Education

Shirley Walters

Lynda: *I feel guilty taking clear leadership.*

Shirley: *Why? Surely we have to acknowledge the questions of authority and power. If authority has been given to you why can you not exercise it within the parameters of that authority. For me the problem is not exercising authority, it is a question of who gives the authority and who can take it away. That is one of the crucial components of democratic leadership.*

Honor: *Yes, it's all very well for you to be so clear about it, but you didn't have to go through the "New Left" and the Women's Movement of the 1960s!*

This is an extract of one of the many informal but intense exchanges which were part of the seminar in Quito. It may not seem surprising that the conversations were so impregnated with discussions about leadership--the official theme for the week was "women and leadership in international adult education." But I was surprised.

En route to Quito I had to stop over in Lima, Peru. There I spent 36 hours with women from the Manuela Ramos Movement. They didn't know me; I didn't know them. But in a very short time I was involved in numerous discussions at lunch, at tea, in the car--and it was all about democratic organizations and leadership. Then in Ecuador, in the seminar and amongst members of the organizations we visited, similar issues were were raised. It all seems to point to an important "moment" in the development of feminist thought on organizational theory and practice.

Questions that came to mind while I was participating in these discussions were: Why do many women feel guilty about taking on leadership roles? Why have the notions of leadership developed in the women's movement as they have? Why are the issues of power and authority so often denied? How have these conceptions helped and hindered the development of leadership amongst women? What are the competing notions of leadership which are emerging within the movement? How and why are they changing and with what effect?

Clearly it is not possible to even begin to answer these questions in this limited space, even if the answers were at hand. All that is possible here is to name the questions and to point to how they emerged during the time and space of the seminar in Ecuador.

Reflecting back on the context of the re-emergence of the feminist movement in the 1960s, with its critique of the dominating practices within the institutions of daily life and within the male-dominated contemporary social movements, it is easy to understand why such a conscious attempt was made to achieve participatory democracy in practice. The concepts of participatory democracy, equality, liberty and community, emphasized that everyone should participate in decisions that affect their lives and that everyone's contribution was equally valid. These ideas led easily to the idea that all hierarchy was "bad", and that power and authority were "bad".

Many critiques of what is increasingly being seen as a naive view of organization have been developed over the years. One example is of Jo Freeman's work of 1975 on "The Politics of Women's Liberation". She argues very strongly that:

Although the ideology damned the idea of leadership, the movement was not without leaders.... Much of the energy of past women's movements had been directed to having the structures of decision-making...formalized so that the exclusion of women could be confronted directly. It is particularly ironic that the women's movement should inflict upon itself a problem it's been fighting for centuries. When informal elites are combined with a myth of "structureless" there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power because the means of doing so have been eliminated. The groups then have no means of compelling responsibility from the elites who dominate them. They cannot even admit they exist.

Now most of us involved in women's organizations are aware of these critiques--many of us agree with them whole-heartedly. We've experienced the issues first hand as either part of the inner or outer circle! But we still feel guilty about accepting leadership, especially our own leadership--why?

Gina Vargas of Peru spoke in her presentation about the difficulty women have with either assuming or granting leadership. This she argued left women outside of the power structures in the society and unable to really affect change substantially. She described the change that has been occurring within the movement in Latin America. Women were beginning to recognize that they had a responsibility to take on leadership positions and that the women's movement was about political power and it was naive to deny the reality of power and the need to challenge it.

But, Gina argued, there was a need to reinterpret the concept of leadership and to ask what a feminist conception of leadership should be. Three aspects which she felt needed to be considered for a feminist conception of leadership were: the question of relative autonomy for the movement, the need to form broad alliances with other women where authoritarian and imposing behaviour is countered, and the need to fight against the competitiveness of leadership in movements. She believed leadership should strengthen women and the women's movement. Women should stop running away from the responsibility of leadership.

Honor Ford-Smith posed similar questions and problems when she reflected on the experience of the Sistren organization in Jamaica. She described how on the one hand, Jamaica has a long history of strong, charismatic leadership based on patronage. And this type of leadership is often respected. On the other hand, in the women's organizations like Sistren, she says that:

"We have shied away from the question of leadership as we have wanted to be collective and democratic. In the process we lost the ability to win certain struggles."

In the case of Sistren, a very important critique of the power relations that actually existed, as opposed to what members wanted to believe existed, was developed. The impact of class, race and education on informal leadership were clearly enunciated. Honor argues that in order for women to begin to grapple with the problems of middle-class domination over working-class members, there must be an acknowledgement that unequal distribution of power exists. Once that has occurred there is a need for the development of "clearcut rules of the game". (This argument resonates with that of Jo Freeman above.)

Both Gina and Honor's arguments, which draw on their long and substantial experience in the women's movement, highlight the need for women to confront the questions of power and authority. They both are very clear that this is not an easy process as women still need to problematize the notion of leadership. But perhaps we need to start at another point--a point which does not deny the importance of women taking on the responsibility of leadership but which looks at what the positive and negative features of leadership are, and in the light of that take another look at what a feminist notion of leadership should be.

Similar to the experiences of Gina in Peru and Honor in Jamaica, I have found within organizations in South Africa more and more people are acknowledging the political nature of organization and the importance of not "being married to" one form of organization. Forms of organization should be determined by the aims and purposes of the organization. We have found that it is important to acknowledge the contradictions and tensions that exist in the theory and practice of participatory forms of organization. As in so many community organizations around the world, participatory democracy has informed many of the women's and other organizations who are fight-

We need to be able to share our training programs, because we want to create grassroots leaders, because we all feel that it is mostly the middle class who are at the forefront of these organizations. How do we train grassroots leaders? What popular education methods work best with the different sectors and experiences women come from?

(Carol, Philippines)

When we are talking about leadership that discussion can't be separated from the commitment and work we're doing on the ground. When we're talking about leadership, we can't separate that from the question of how we organize women to take initiatives in their context, in their society. This is the approach to leadership that takes up the challenge of popular education. It means looking self-critically at how we are leaders. We can't be complacent in saying we are leaders, and yet we need to take responsibility for our leadership roles within organizations and movements.

(Lynda, Canada)

After the destruction of the Palestinian camps, only organizations such as ours, which were built on a collective structure were able to survive and rebuild what had been destroyed. This meant consistently organizing women to take the initiative, to take leadership. This is the best meaning of leadership in our society.

It's important that we as leaders understand that we must be dispensable. We must create new leaders. This should be a priority in all our work. That brings us back to the political question of how do we organize women? We cannot enter and organize women on theories, slogans. We have to respond to their immediate needs, whether it is poverty, food, political rights or national liberation. We must respond to their needs and to what they want. Understanding that is a test of our leadership. Experience has shown us, for example, that women in Lebanon cannot be organized around the issue of equality. They would laugh at us if we tried this. What they want is to defend themselves and their families. What they want is to have clothes, and to go back to their country. This is what the women consider as priorities.

(Leila, Lebanon)

ing injustice in South Africa. There is no space here to elaborate in detail on these debates but two examples will suffice to illustrate the point.

Inherent in participatory democratic practices is the need for degrees of openness and trust. There needs to be a supportive, open, consensus-seeking climate which is essential for the sharing of responsibility which is at the heart of this form of organization. However, this participatory democratic practice tends to deny the reality of conflict within organizations. Conflict in South African organizations is inherent--along either class, race, ideological, or gender lines. The lack of acknowledgement of conflict has often resulted in conflicting interest groups organizing in clandestine ways, which is the very antithesis of the "openness and honesty" so essential to participatory democratic practice.

Another example of a contradictory practice within participatory organization relates to the question of leadership. In South Africa leadership within participatory democratic organizations is usually shared by all members of the collective. No one is given authority to lead. In many instances a laissez faire climate, closer to anarchy than democracy, exists where anyone wishing to assert leadership is shouted down. A malaise sets in where no one dares to show leadership for fear of being accused of being "undemocratic". In the heightened political climate in which people organize, increasingly questions are being asked about the appropriateness of the participatory democratic form which can so often result in paralysis rather than action. Many people are acknowledging the need for strong vision and leadership to propel organizations forward.

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One of the responses to the above analysis of organization is the development of other conceptions of democratic leadership. These have been strongly influenced by the progressive trade union movement. In these conceptions of what has been called "collectivist democracy" both the importance of mass participation and the importance of clear leadership is acknowledged. On the one hand the importance of participation of as many people as possible in the processes of major decision-making is stressed, while on the other, there is acknowledgement of the importance of clear delegation of power and authority to leadership in order to both get tasks done and to drive the organizations forward. Mandates are given to leaders who must be accountable to the members through regular reports back. The membership has the authority to both give and recall mandates of the leadership. It is therefore not the existence of power and authority in organizations that is most important, but the question of who has the power to give and recall that authority.

There are many questions that still need to be addressed as we strive to develop a more adequate notion of leadership within the feminist movement. At the seminar in Ecuador there appeared to be agreement on one issue at least--we need to move beyond the denial of leadership and the necessary political power and authority that implies. But we also need to continue to challenge traditional features of leadership in practice, such as the pervasiveness of authoritarianism and competition. We need to ask whether it is the authoritarianism and competitiveness within predominantly male leadership against which we have reacted in the movement. If this is the case, a question which could potentially move us towards finding a more satisfactory feminist notion of leadership could be: What would leadership be like which works actively against authoritarian and competitive practices?

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Strategic Contradictions

Organizational Democracy and Dependence on International Aid

by Honor Ford-Smith

The following is a brief excerpt from the conclusion of a forthcoming Women's Program publication about Sistren, a women's popular theatre group in Jamaica.* Strategic Contradictions *is a detailed account of Sistren's historical and organizational development since 1977. Honor presented draft sections from her case study as a catalyst for discussion in Quito.

At the start, I drew attention to the importance of strengthening the feminist movement at this moment in Caribbean history and to the question why many new feminist organizations as yet have been unable to affect women's conditions of life in a fundamental way. In the case of Sistren I have argued that the group was restricted in its impact because of its internal structure and the effects of the funding policies of international aid agencies.

Collective Contradictions

From the beginning, a major problem was the way in which the group came in practice to equate democracy with a single notion--that of collective decision making.

The undifferentiated collective form has a number of problems. It can be antithetical to productivity and service delivery because it tends to substitute internal practice with a single notion--that of collective decision making. Where it functions in the conservative capitalist third world [it often] masks the continuation of the central contradictions of capitalist societies--such as race and class. Where ideological variety or differences exist within a group these become obstacles to sameness rather than opportunities to develop the richness and complexity of the group's work. The undifferentiated collective structure lends itself to the exercise of power by informal leaders whose roles can never be clearly defined, who are not clearly accountable internally in the group, and who tend to operate covertly. Real processes of decision making then become masked and the organization becomes bogged down in the morass of endless meetings, low productivity, a sense of diffused responsibility and low morale.

From the beginning, a major problem was the way in which the group came in practice to equate democracy with a single notion--that of collective decision making.

... In Sistren's history the phase of intense collectivity was a necessary one, [in that] it unquestionably exposed members to areas of decision making involved in running the organization and acquainted everyone with the skills of advocacy. At this point in the organization's growth however, the movement toward some specialization and differentiation also seems necessary and inevitable if its problems are to be solved.

What shape then can be envisioned for a democratic organization which is not a collective? There can be no dogmatic answer to this question. Just as the collective decision making model works in some situations, but not in others, there can be no one true democratic organizational form, which will work effectively across cultures and in different political and economic contexts. ... [In this search, t]wo concepts in need of fuller discussion are those of management and leadership.

In the effort to throw out the idea of the personality cult and the charismatic leader, the progressive movement has not really defined alternative forms of leadership. For women's groups it is perhaps especially difficult to grant and accept leadership from other women. Historically women have been excluded from the processes by which power has

come to reside in particular people or groups of people. Male, white, middle-class privilege has been so founded on hierarchy, division and specialization that the women's movement has been cautious about reproducing forms which seemed to imitate these models. At the same time, in organizations where women have granted leadership, maternalism and the dominant form of race and class power are often reflected. In the Caribbean it is particularly difficult to come to terms with the issue of leadership because of the way race and class and skill are tied and because resistance to these forms of domination are often covert, informal and unnamed. However to avoid the discussion of leadership is no solution at all. ...

The term management also tends to be interpreted as an authoritarian big boot, squeezing the life blood out of its underlings. Management in our setting carries the connotation of exploiters from "the evil empire" of capitalism. ... [But in r]ejecting the worst of capitalism we must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water. Management and leadership, whether they reside in individuals or in groups of people need to be controlled by defining both what they are to manage and how they can be accountable and removable at different moments in an organization's life. ... Issues of skills transfer and education could then be addressed in a systematic and consistent way. A key concept in thinking about democratic management then is accountability--a concept which can be applied differently both within an organization and externally with those it serves.

The Politics of "Aid"

A second major problem which confronted Sistren was the effect of international funding policies on the organization. Agencies funding projects in the Third World have an enormous amount of power. One only has to glimpse the files of any agency involved in so-called development to recognize the enormous amounts of information they have accumulated about progressive organizations and the amount of power the dispensing of funds gives them over people's lives all over the world. They are able to shape the lives of the organizations they support, not simply because they fund them, but also because of the processes they require the agencies to become involved in. The term "partner" currently being used by donor agencies to describe their relationship with recipient organizations only obscures what remains a very real power relation. This egalitarian label does not change the reality.

The emphasis of international agencies on funding "grassroots" women seems to be contradictory and simplistic.

One area which women's groups need to face squarely concerns the tendency on the part of agencies to prioritize material production over educational and cultural processes and to see these areas as separate and distinct. This separation in the long run serves to entrench dependency because it means that internal processes of organizational development and transfer of skills are always subsumed under the "more important" process of production. In fact production and education are inextricably linked. ...

On the other hand, to prioritize educational cultural processes over so-called production is to ignore the importance of building up some form of self-financing. Any single issue or set of issues which come to be prioritized for funding by agencies can be used against the development of effective organizational processes. International funding agencies often determine priorities which are applied in a blanket way. Our experience has shown that very careful attention has to be paid to local conditions. The political and cultural context, available skills and resources are all areas which need very careful consideration and which will enormously affect what is possible for any organization. When local factors are not taken into consideration, choices about program activities can be made which have long term negative consequences for local organizations. This is especially so when organizations are young or operate in a conservative context in which there is little capacity for negotiation with more powerful international agencies. When an organiza-

tion's survival is at stake, the criteria of international agencies will always take priority over developing processes of accountability to its constituency.

Such mistakes cannot be waved away. Their implications mushroom into new difficulties which are often harder to deal with than those problems they were originally meant to solve. They involve people's lives, hopes, energies, investments and resources in deep ways. The disillusionment and bitterness they create deeply affect an organization's potential to have an impact on its community and to build a healthy working culture.

Finally, the emphasis of international agencies on funding "grassroots" women seems to be contradictory and simplistic. Grassroots women are not miracle workers and like anyone else need to study and understand a situation before they can work effectively in it. ... Agency policies sometimes emphasize the delivery of funding to grassroots women while ignoring the many complex processes in which both gender and many classes are involved, processes which reproduce the conditions the funding is meant to alleviate. [T]he effect often does not contribute to social transformation. In fact, as was the experience of Sistren, it can reproduce relationships of dependency and domination both internally inside groups and between aid agencies and recipients.

Organizations like Sistren are not at the stage where they can do without these foreign funders. Neither is it the first time in history that organizations working for radical transformation in one society require the support of richer groups in conservative societies. It will be a long time before we cease to need foreign funding. Nevertheless we are at a stage where women's organizations working together internationally can use their lobbying power collectively to make these agencies accountable to the groups they are supposed to be serving. Just as we need to be accountable to those we serve so they also need to take on board their accountability to those whom they serve. Collective dialogue is key if groups are to have clear channels of communication and clearer input into the policies of these agencies and the ways in which these are implemented regionally. ...

In many funding agencies there are members of staff who are genuinely concerned about issues of dependency and democracy. These women want to work internationally around some of the struggles we face. The power of the agencies does not exist in a monolithic institutional sense. It operates through people who have a degree of leverage at their disposal. It is up to us to build alliances that are genuinely internationalist in order to bring about changes.

One area which women's groups need to face squarely concerns the tendency on the part of agencies to prioritize material production over educational and cultural processes and to see these areas as separate and distinct. This separation in the long run serves to entrench dependency because it means that internal processes of organizational development and transfer of skills are always subsumed under the "more important" process of production.

Financial relations influence the work that we are carrying out and in this way international agencies exert power and control upon the NGOs or popular movements that develop projects. We see that the policies of what type of projects will be financed are always defined outside our countries. At the same time we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the problem is not only outside us. The result of this situation oftentimes is a competition between NGOs for money. Very often these agencies ask other NGOs, what do you think of this or that group and if one is not alert to this we end up being divided. These things become worse when we have financial problems within our own organizations . . . all the different relationships of power and competition make it more difficult to carry out the work we know is important and to work together in truly supportive ways.

(Teresa, Chile)

Simryn Gill

Growing Pains:
reflections on the history of Flora Tristan, Peru

Virginia (Gina) Vargas is the Director of Flora Tristan, one of the strongest and longest running women's centres in Latin America. Virginia's reflections on the centre's history in response to Honor Ford-Smith's presentation provoked much discussion.

In the Flora Tristan Centre what happened was that we suddenly became aware of the contradictions of growing, and all our energy got put into sorting out these internal adjustments so that we weren't accomplishing what we set out to do. Instead of improving, growth in many ways made things worse. It got to a point where certain problems were impossible to ignore. So, at the end of eleven years we were asking ourselves a lot of questions . . . about internal and external accountability, and the need for a much stronger sense of accountability to the broader women's movement. And then also about the problem that comes up in collective structure related to our notions of equality and leadership. It seems that in fighting against the rigidity of what we saw and experiences we'd had in left and other movements, we went to the other extreme.

Something that has caused a great deal of confusion within Flora is the distinction between being a working centre--even a feminist working centre --and being part of the feminist movement. A great number of our difficulties have been to confuse the centre with the movement. In working centres, our programs and projects have to be completed and deadlines met. Feminist work centres can be very feminist but we have very different rhythms, schedules, structures and different uses for money. The movement is something broader; it is a more fluid thing, more flexible. I believe that as service centres we have to accept the consequences of this difference.

In Flora we have gone through stages in coming to terms with this. First we were a small collective. Then, as we grew it was clear that not all of those who came to work in the centre were part of the feminist movement. Many were just developing their consciousness. And it came to a point when it seemed that the collective was operating in opposition or distinct from the feminist movement, especially in terms of administrative issues. In that period I felt we lost all our richness; we were divided--the collective on the one hand, and the work on the other. And this was when we really began to accept a distinction between the work of the centre, which is part of our paid work and that of the movement which is fundamentally volunteer, and outside office hours. The importance of this is coming to terms with the limits and the boundaries of the centre.

While the general dynamics of the movement can be taken up by our centres, there are real limits to the flexibility within the work. This raises the whole question of what you call accountability . . . how and to whom to be accountable. In some instances (and it's not always possible) we've been able to reach understandings or agreements with women's organizations about budgets or work plans we adopt on a joint basis. This is one way you commit yourself ... it becomes an issue of mutual accountability. But to arrive at this point we have had to make a great number of mistakes, and sometimes it creates mistrust.

The problems of women's organizations in different countries are in many ways similar. The major challenge has to do with the relationship between democracy and efficiency. How do we achieve democratic and fluid relationships, where people can feel they are expressing themselves, where they can be doing the work they like, and at the same time be efficient as organizations? The balance is very difficult to achieve and is a great source of conflict. As far as I'm concerned this requires something that we have learned through many years of experience but something we didn't have very clear at the beginning--which is the need for clear-cut channels, of leadership and of the rules of the game or accountability. We are often still not very comfortable with this. This relates to quite deep

limits we face in the feminist movement, things some of us tried to address in the document called "From Need to Love". In part it is because of something that is very much part of us as women, which is a need to see ourselves reflected in other people. There is also our desire to protect. What often happens is that we start to find an important reference in our lives in the organization, we begin to find a space that we didn't have in the past. The organization becomes the father, the mother, the lover...our own space, and an enormous source of conflict, conflict that we haven't been able to solve in our lives.

The following document, From Need to Love, was a collective effort from a workshop entitled "Feminist Politics in Latin America Today" at the Fourth Meeting of Latin American Feminists in Mexico in October 1987. Virginia Vargas shared it with the participants at the Quito seminar.

Simryn Gill

From Need to Love

In comparing experiences from different countries, we find certain myths which are significantly constant. A strong commitment to these beliefs has created a feminist political practice which prevents us positively valuing our differences and makes it difficult to build a feminist political project.

1. *As feminists, we are not interested in power.*
2. *Feminists have a different way of being political.*
3. *All feminists are equal.*
4. *Women have an inherent natural unity.*
5. *Feminism exists as a political relationship only between women.*
6. *The small group is the movement.*
7. *Women's spaces, in and of themselves, ensure a positive process.*
8. *It is valid because I as a woman feel it.*
9. *What is personal is automatically political.*
10. *Consensus equals democracy.*

As feminists, we are not interested in power. If we recognize, first of all, that power is essential to changing existing conditions, we cannot but be interested in it. Through our activism, we have seen that as feminists we are indeed interested in power, but by failing to admit this openly we have made no headway in building democratic power. What we do, in fact, is to exercise power arbitrarily. Furthermore, we reproduce the way in which we handle power within the home environment--that is through victimization and manipulation.

Yes. We do want power; power to change social relations in order to create a democratic society in which the demands of each sector find a space for solution. This requires defining certain rules to play by in order to ensure that the plurality of different social sectors be encompassed. In summary, we want power to build a democratic and participatory society.

This ties us closely with the second myth: Feminists have a different way of being political. Yes, politically we do operate in a backwards, arbitrary, victimized and manipulative manner. In theory, we try to be otherwise, but if we are honest with ourselves we see that our practice leaves much to be desired. This is related to the difficulty we have in reconciling unity with diversity while being democratic, something which is not only a need but also a condition for action. This difficulty makes it impossible for us to establish clear-cut rules to play by.

The non-acceptance of diversity is tied in with another myth. All feminists are equal. In denying the differences between women (in intellect, skills, sensitivity, etc) practice has been paralyzed, making the movement less effective and less significant politically. This myth of equality is connected with another belief that dominates our practice, the idea of "woman as woman" regardless of class, race, age or nationality, and the consequent myth that "women have an inherent natural unity."

All of us know that there are no predetermined actors, but rather that we are all formed within a social context. Women as political subjects, are likewise formed within a social and political context. This idea of natural unity between women, the idea of "womanhood", has been a reoccurring phantom within feminism and is manifested in the fifth myth: Feminism only exists as a political relationship between women. This is in contradiction with the idea of

feminism as a transforming force.

The belief of "being a woman," of the natural unity between women, of a political orientation from and for women, has the effect of confusing the feminist group with the feminist movement. This is nothing more than thinking that women's spaces in and of themselves ensure and bring about transformation. This "womanism" has become idealized, ignoring that on countless occasions, women's spaces become asphyxiating ghettos where self-complacency hinders criticism and development. It also involves denying how often we as feminists take what happens in our groups for the movement itself. By remaining within a closed-in group, we are prevented from confronting other women, other ideas, other forms of feminism.

The ninth myth: What is personal is automatically political makes this distinctive slogan of feminism absurd. Although this slogan embodies legitimate criticism of the artificial division between home life and public environment, stating that everything that is personal is automatically political, makes the political automatically arbitrary. There are personal issues that are not political and there are personal issues that are pathological.

One concrete example of such arbitrary politics is the notion that consensus is the expression of democracy. This results in confusing consensus with unanimity, and fails to analyze that consensus implicitly grants someone the right to veto. This mechanism thus becomes the basis for authoritarianism.

These ten myths have been generating a situation of frustration, self-complacency, erosion, inefficiency and confusion, a situation detected by many feminists, who have recognized it as being present in the large majority of groups involved in politics in Latin America. . . .

We cannot assume that there is an inherent quality to "being a woman." We must acknowledge that our inequality has existed because we have lived in a symbolical and material impoverishment. ... Our interaction with the world has been defined by living for others, with love being our only quality which is considered important. This way of seeing the relationship between women and the world has become the erroneous foundation for the political and social life of feminists, for women's groups and the feminist movement in general. We have developed a "logic of love"--we love each other, we are all equal--which does not allow us to accept conflicts, differences and inequality.

To untangle this interwoven fabric requires putting an end to this "logic of love," and proceeding to a relationship based on need. As women, we need each other in order to affirm ourselves and gather strength. By accepting this need, we recognize our differences and provide for ourselves mutual support, strength and authority. In other words, if we recognize that another woman has something that we do not have, greater organizational capabilities, greater intellectual development, more skills for jobs, etc. then we give her our trust, we value her and we endow her with authority. We find our strength in her strength and we value ourselves as women. The strength of one woman is the strength of all women. In this way we can reject the apparent security that we get from feeling that we are all equal. We do not seek the reflection of equality in order to confirm in ourselves something which is, in fact, not valued. Rather, the idea is to put an end to self complacency, to break with the victim mentality.

Haydée Birgin (Argentina)
Celeste Cambría (Perú)
Fresia Carrasco (Perú)
Viviana Erazo (Chile)
Marta Llamas (México)
Margarita Pisano (Chile)
Adriana SantaCruz ((Chile)
Estela Suárez (México)
Virginia Vargas (Perú)
Victoria Villanueva (Perú)

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Summing Up: the common threads

First there was the theme of organizational development in the different regions, which started with the concern from the Asian colleagues to strengthen the coordination process from the local level right up to the international. This is expressed by the development of the NGO movement and, for example, by the need for stable financing, which is a problem raised by all of us. In all the regions there is this need to develop organization, coordination, and also to strengthen and reinforce what already is in place.

Another topic was the importance of deepening our understanding of exchange, not simply "visits" but experiences that entail discussion, debate, and a deep sharing, and learning from different viewpoints. This was a contribution made by the African colleagues, clearly articulating the kind of exchange that we aspire to.

There was a demand for training, which was expressed by colleagues from Africa and Asia, but not only training for educators like us, but also learning how to train grassroots leaders.

The need for research, publications and information was common to all of us, but was expressed differently coming from the perspective of different regions. In Latin America for example there is a need to learn and to produce knowledge from our own practice. In Africa there is a need to increase research capacities and simply to have more materials, so to be able to disseminate information and to find out what's going on in other parts of the world. From the North . . . from North America and Europe we talked about the important role of disseminating information, which very often is not accessible to other countries. . . information on the living conditions and on the issues and divisions in the movement internationally.

Throughout all this is the general call for solidarity which needs to be expressed in all we do, in training, in exchange. It can be something as simple as sharing publications, in sharing the way in which we are going to develop our organizations, although perhaps more intensively in very serious and critical moments when human rights are violated which is now the case in South Africa, in Palestine, and in Central America.

We also raised the importance of having the capacity within our organizations and in the network to respond to "emergency topics" which may not have been so prevalent up to now, but which require that we get involved and work to find responses. Many of these require international strategies. Issues such as "survival strategies" that go beyond mere income generation, the "debt crisis," AIDS, or the sexual trafficking in women that still goes on. And of course there continue to be the larger issues of war and peace, and human rights violations which are shared as concerns in Asia, Africa, Latin and North America and Europe.

(Teresa, Chile)

Moving On: ICAE Harare Meetings

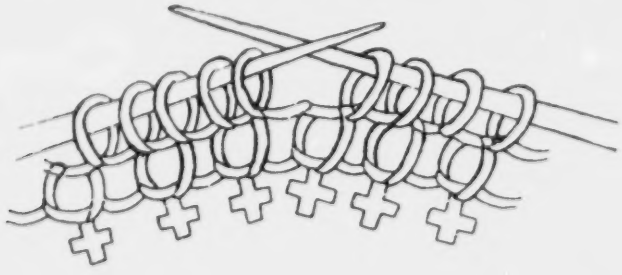
Just over three months after the Quito Seminar, a number of us were together again, this time in Harare, Zimbabwe amidst a much larger gathering of educators attending the ICAE Executive Meetings and a joint ICAE/African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) Conference on the Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa.

The Women's Program wanted to take advantage of the Harare meetings to begin the first stage of an exchange program organized with the Women's Network of AALAE, to learn more about education for women in Africa and to strengthen the voice of African women in our network. We also wanted to carry forward the work of Quito by engaging with the ICAE Executive in discussions of the ideas and proposals developed there.

Criticisms have been made of the Women's Program that it has developed too independently from, and outside of the ICAE structures and associations, that we haven't focussed enough attention on working with existing member organizations and affiliates to develop the position of women within these. There has been some truth to that view. We have been concentrating our energies on building links with those groups which are working actively with grassroots women, which are trying to do a different kind of education, one that mobilizes and empowers and that takes a commitment to transforming gender relations as its starting point.

But, as was clear from our discussions in Quito, we have no interest in isolating ourselves. Many groups in the Women's Program network are linked to national and regional adult education structures. Where they are not, this is often due to the ineffectiveness or irrelevance of the existing adult education structures in relation to grassroots groups. Whether we are formally associated with other structures or not, we strongly believe that as educators we are legitimately part of and have much to contribute to the adult education movement.

There will no doubt continue to be tensions and accomodations to be made around this question of the relationship of the Women's Program to regional adult education organizations. Hopefully this tension will be a creative one, prompting our network members and other adult education groups to clarify



Returning home to Ecuador after the meetings in Harare, I had the chance to reflect on that rich and positive experience. For me, one of the most important things was coming to know a bit better the ICAE, its people, commitments and perspectives.

I came away with two strong convictions. The first comes out of the consultation I began with members of the executive about the participation of women in the ICAE. I felt that this was a very valuable dialogue. Since then I've thought a lot about how important it is to know the opinions of the others and maintain an open attitude in order to better facilitate a mutual understanding and a more clear perspective on these issues.

The second aspect of the Harare experience that struck me was the importance of face-to-face exchanges among women. In my opinion this is one of the most effective ways of firmly basing our international work. Engaging with diverse cultures and ways of thinking in order to find common points of interest is the challenge that we face. I believe that the Women's Program has a responsibility to continue to provide oppurtunities for encounters between women to generate real solidarity and unify us.

(Rocio, Ecuador
Vice President CEAAL,
Coordinator of CEAAL
Women's Network)

photo: Jane Gurr

their responsibilities to their constituencies and to the broader adult education movement. Our presence in Harare showed in a concrete way our commitment to working closely and collaboratively with member associations of the International Council.

At its January 29, 1989 session the ICAE Executive approved the setting up of a Task Force on the Participation of Women with terms of reference which include devising a policy for strengthening the participation of women in ICAE activities and structures; carrying out a survey of the role of women in leadership positions in the ICAE Executive, activities and members associations; monitoring the participation of women in ICAE activities and devising a concrete plan for increasing the numbers of women sitting on the ICAE Executive. The Task Force is to report to the next Executive committee in January 1990. To help begin the work, Rocio Rocero took the opportunity of the Harare meetings to carry out interviews and consult with different participants.

I think we should discuss how we can improve interaction between the ICAE Executive and the women's contingent at the executive meetings who are invited as observers. It did not work too well in Harare, I feel. It is hardly fair to any of us that the women-observers are present at the meetings--as observers--and outside the meetings they are so busy with other matters that you can't even speak to them at mealtimes because also the meals will be used for special women's meetings. I am exaggerating a bit--a little bit. We miss being able to talk to the other half of the world about the big issues. I would hate to think that this is not a reciprocal matter.

(ICAE Executive Member)

photo Jane Gurr

The South-South encounter seems to have set a wave of awakening to the need for closer links and sharing of our developmental efforts and visions. I think it also further confirmed the eagerness of African womento share and to learn what is happening in other countries. Let us keep up the Spirit.

(Maria, Kenya)

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Zimbabwe: Producing a Popular Text

Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, after a lengthy war of liberation against the white-ruled Rhodesian government. Kathy Bond-Stewart has been working with Sylvia Kuimba, Talent Nyathi and Chris Hodzi to produce a popular education book about women and development for the Zimbabwean Ministry of Community and Cooperative Development and the Ministry of Political Affairs (where Women's Affairs is now based). Kathy talked about this exciting and complex process over a lengthy discussion with Jane Gurr and Chan Lean Heng of the Women's Program during the ICAE Executive meetings in Zimbabwe in February, 1989. The interview reveals the creativity that can be unleashed at the grassroots level.

Can you tell us something about the context in which you work in Zimbabwe?

One of the most important changes in Zimbabwe since independence has been decentralization; the setting up of democratically elected village and ward development committees in the communal areas where about 65 percent of the population live. These committees must have at least one woman member each (though some have more and women chairpersons). They are serviced by community workers, and of 8000 community workers in Zimbabwe, the majority are women. Most of the women in leadership positions at this level are capable farmers, with years of liberation struggle experience behind them.

The Ministry of Community Development, which also has some impressive women in top positions, contracted me (and later my three colleagues) to set up a Community Publishing Programme. My only guidelines were to study the reality and to design a critical and imaginative process to support the emerging leadership in the villages. That sort of liberty in Africa is very unusual.

What is the focus of the book on women?

It deals with history and women's economic, political and social situation, and includes women of all ages, regions and backgrounds--from prostitutes and prisoners to leaders and ministers. The book focuses on women's contribution and achievements, as well as problems and strategies. We're also looking at the international dimension. What we hope to achieve in this book is to explain the importance of the full participation of women in all aspects of development, to provide information on the situation of women, and to help change negative attitudes about women held by both women and men. We also want to generate national discussion on women's issues and strategies.

Who will be the audience?

Village leaders, village community workers and educators from different government ministries, and trainers and field workers from non-governmental organizations. The book will be written simply enough to be understood by all literate adults, and designed for both women and men, from rural and urban areas. Although our book is written in a popular form, we hope that it will also be read by donors, policy-makers and researchers.

How did you go about producing the book?

Well, like the two previous books we did with the ministry, we're producing it through a collective process. We have more than doubled the number of

people involved to about 800 contributors throughout Zimbabwe. We started by meeting people from different ministries and from non-governmental organizations in Harare and at the provincial centres. We got from them what they wanted from the book as well as what they could offer.

But the most enjoyable part of our research was our journey throughout Zimbabwe visiting a group of village community workers, and a village, in a district in each of the eight provinces. The ministry has a contact in every village, so they let people know we were coming and why. They would gather the people together and we would explain our purpose--using a lot of music and dance and laughter.

In those meetings what we did was really an intensive listening survey. Although we have mounds of documentation on the situation of women, we tried to suspend everything we'd ever heard or thought about women and go into the situation very fresh. I think it's crucial to develop a kind of humility in this work and to be able to use criticism objectively, because even some quite radical people are so convinced that they have the answer and everyone else is wrong, that they miss a lot.

So we would simply introduce the idea of the book and get people talking about what they wanted and what they could contribute. It was fascinating. The gatherings were often 60-70 people, so we'd break into small groups to get lots of ideas from every single person. Everyone gave us ideas, even quite shy people who are not very used to talking in public. We wanted it to be both confidence building and problem-solving.

An aspect of the process which was quite unusual was that from the very beginning we involved men. We thought it was very important. If it had been a "women's only" publication, very few people would have read it, and it wouldn't have got into any of the institutions or agencies or even into the villages in a way that is really going to make a big difference.

We started this by involving men who we worked with in the past--men who have an official responsibility to work with women. Through them we managed to meet a very wide range of other men. Actually the interchanges between the men and women at the meetings were very lively, and the women were very outspoken.

There would be the male chauvinists at the meetings; we certainly got a lot of those. But we were not looking for oppressive men, we were very open to whatever we found. What was very unusual was that we met a lot of men who talked very strongly about women's great contribution and achievements. To hear men talk like that is very convincing for ordinary Zimbabweans, even for women. We found that contribution from men very valuable.

What was also amusing was that when men tried to interrupt or shout down a woman, the women would say, "We've heard enough of you. You just shut up." That was also very nice!

But I can only think of one case where a very traditional man, an elder, got up and walked away from a meeting. In most of the gatherings the men were absolutely fascinated.

In addition to getting an idea from the people of what they wanted in the book, we also asked for contributions. For the first time instead of interviewing village women, as we did in the past and getting their comments on the shape of the book, we are getting contributions directly. We are asking village women to write, draw, compose poems and send us their songs and plays. We encourage songs and stories and drama in all our workshops. In every village we visited we asked for volunteers to coordinate the collection of the stories. We ended up with hundreds of addresses!

When we got back to Harare we wrote to the people in the villages thanking them for the visit and giving them some guidelines about what we wanted. In Zimbabwe there's a lot of respect for very formal boring English --dead language. We had to really encourage people to work in their own languages and to use the very colourful and strong language they use in everyday life. We gave them ideas on the kind of stories we wanted and topics, and held our breath.

Just last week the stories started coming in, very fast every day. Some

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lovely drawings as well, and jokes and songs and poems. It's exciting.

It's amazing because there's still some illiteracy in Zimbabwe, and some people always look down on villagers as being illiterate. But when you get 20 pages beautifully written, in perfect handwriting from a very busy village woman you realize there's an incredible capacity which no one ever bothered to tap before. So we are only hoping that through the book and through the workshops we can really develop that.

How do you think you were able to engage this kind of interest?

Because of our process. We spend a few minutes explaining our purpose and then we express a great deal of confidence in the people there--that they have a huge amount to offer--and putting them in very small groups where they would not be shy. And we give them enough time to talk and really think of what they feel strongly about. They came up with delicate issues which we didn't think people would have the courage to raise, touching on very sensitive issues, like suicide of women farmers or abortion among schoolgirls or prostitution.

What happened with this book is that we found all that's best in Zimbabwe and all that's worst. It's fascinating.

We also discovered so much of women's strength. In one case we met a woman chairperson of an irrigation scheme involving about 700 families. It used to be an all-male committee, but nothing was working. So they brought a woman in and everything started moving--to the point where the men did domestic work to help the woman because they suddenly realized what a huge force the women were.

Another example was when we visited a group of women construction workers working with men. The men couldn't stop singing their praises, about how well they were working. The women had pride and confidence.

Another thing we hope to express in the book is humour. There have been very painful moments but there's been a fantastic sense of humour running through all the discussions.

What kind of humour

I think in a way it's part of surviving, because humour can give people wisdom and a broad perspective on issues which would otherwise drive you mad. But it is also the way the women deal with men--they push the men in a way which the men can accept but which is still strong.

What are the next stages in producing the book?

Next month we're doing in-depth interviews of a few people about each of the featured topics in the book. Then we'll put together a rough draft and in about four months we'll send it out to all the districts and people we visited. Afterwards we'll have workshops with the key people from each province, including at least one representative from each of the community groups we visited. We have about a month to pull the book apart with them and then put it back together again. Participants are developing sophisticated editing skills we've found that collective editing is much more effective than working individually.

The final stage will be a last workshop where we'll get the key dynamic leaders from all the provinces together. This is when we work out a national consensus on the final form of the book.

The national consensus is very important because some of the issues in this women's book are going to be controversial. Thus the fact that a book comes from all 55 districts and has been through a national process, makes it both popular and authoritative.

How will the book be distributed?

We hope that it will be printed and translated in early 1990. Then it will be introduced in every district by the extension workers and the village community workers. We'll have lots and lots of workshops--about 1600 in the different languages--to encourage people to just use the book as a starting point to generate their own ideas. These workshops are very important, because we've found that the print media in Zimbabwe is dead unless it's combined with interpersonal communication.

Who will be conducting these workshops around the book?

Mainly the people who helped to pull the book together--the extension workers and educators. They have the final responsibility in terms of distributing it, which gives distribution a whole boost. In Africa distribution has been the main problem. Because people begin with the publication and then think "Now, how are we going to get it out?" But if you begin with the popular organizations there's no problem because the people are very committed to it.

So the workshops around the book will be conducted by the staff from our ministry, mainly district officers, and people from other ministries and NGOs. They will be very important in getting the book out everywhere. All of the best people in terms of the book are the people who went through

that whole struggle of the liberation war. The urban areas are more difficult in that they have very few popular organizations, but again because we have people everywhere we know how to get things out.

Our district officers and extension workers on the whole are good people who've often come through years of experience in the liberation struggle. They earn low salaries, they operate under impossible conditions, and they work long hours. They have very little recognition or respect but they're very important in terms of getting things done in Zimbabwe. Some of them are really marvelous people, very dedicated and inspiring. Most of the women district officers are older married women with lots of kids and very energetic. But there are even some marvelous men. Some of the ex-combatants from the liberation struggle got jobs as district officers in the different ministries. It's quite a low level government job but once you can tap their energy and interest they see it as part of their whole political commitment.

Do you need to train the extension workers in how to give workshops?

That's been an important part of putting the book together. It's very much a tool for training. Instead of someone drawing up a curriculum and someone else writing a textbook, and then it's taken out and it's supposed to be used for training. Foe us the most exciting part of the training is developing the training materials together.

The main thing about the book so far is that the workshops are very confidence-building, because the participants have to take over and run the thing themselves. They get experience in organizing life in a more imaginative and democratic way and they have to learn to deal with conflicts and aggression and shyness.

The process of producing the book must be spinning off a lot of different kinds of developments in communities, and leadership in people and so on.

Yes, I really think so. I see it as about a ten year program. The initial books and workshops are going to become something else, because of the sort of talents and intelligence we're giving space to. Some of the most intelligent women I've met anywhere in Zimbabwe were this group of ex-squatters who had worked in the coffee farms who are now being re-settled--people who no-one pays any attention to. They had the most vigorous analytical minds. We want to find and encourage this energy and talent and creativity, which is left out of so many of the official things which go on in Zimbabwe.

One of the main aims of a process like this is that the kind of skills we have in terms of development and media and adult education become much more the property of every Zimbabwean. For example with the talent we saw emerging there's no reason why every village should not produce in the end novelists, poets, and scientists and philosophers.

One thing I've realized is development has been so dehumanized that people will think about food and houses and water but so little attention is being paid to people's more subtle needs to really have their minds stretched and to discover their talents. I think that giving people a chance to really use their brains and to discover new capacities in themselves is motivating enough in itself because in Zimbabwe we don't challenge people enough intellectually. People, especially in the villages and districts, love being challenged intellectually.

Let's end with the words of the contributors themselves. One of the worst aspects of the oppression of Zimbabwean women in the past (by men, and the colonial regime) was the oppression of their minds, as some contributors describe in the drawing on the following page.

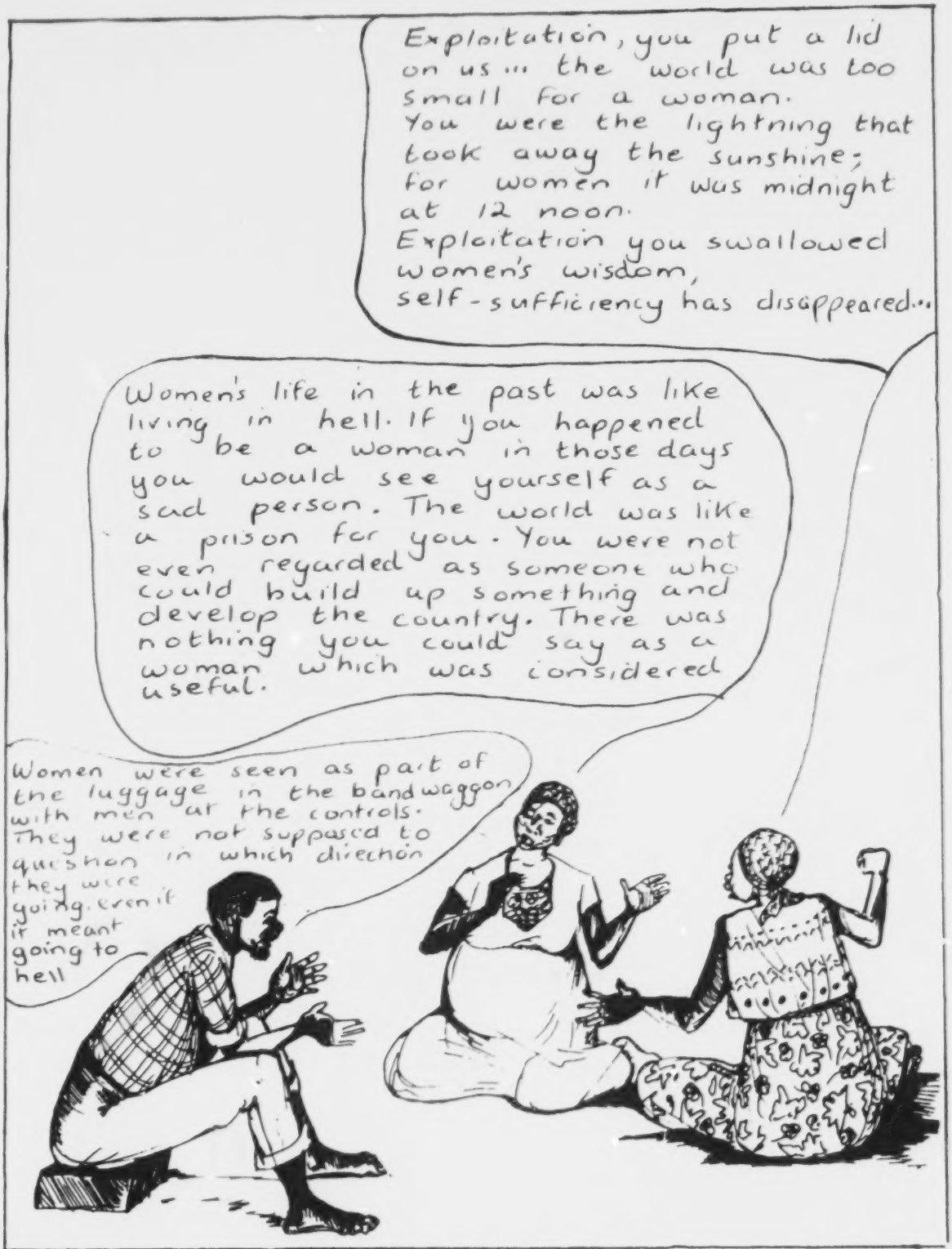
One of the most exciting aspects of post-independence Zimbabwe, not just for women, but for the whole country, is the emergence of more and more women with a new consciousness. It is women like these who have done most to shape our book. Women's wisdom is being restored, as M. Chitumba from Wedza, describes:

"In the past, women had nothing to do with what went on outside their homes. They had nowhere to prove their intelligence. They could only prove to their husbands that they were intelligent. The man would at times use the wisdom gained from his wife on other men where they gathered. With the change of times I have witnessed the change in women's thinking and way of life. They started going out and attending meetings and classes. This was a blessing to women in the communal areas of Zimbabwe. It gave them great wisdom. Women's brains were sharpened; they can now tackle problems as an axe chops wood."

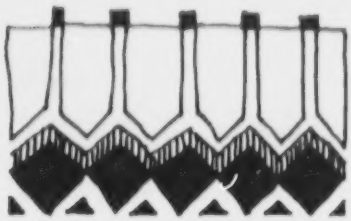
Mrs. B. Ndlovu, from a clinic in Gwanda, expresses what women have felt about contributing to the book: "Tradition did not permit women to show intellectual strength... I am very much overjoyed to be given this opportunity of expressing our views as women in our country, Zimbabwe. We feel very much honoured by the nation. I think and believe that this book will liberate many women in our country."

Kathy Bond-Stewart
Community Publishing Programme
189 Baines Avenue
Harare
Zimbabwe

(Thanks to Jill and Don McMaster of CIDA for facilitating rapid communication between Harare and Toronto.)

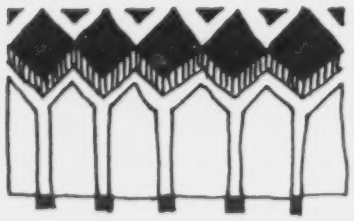

Exploitation, you put a lid on us ... the world was too small for a woman.
You were the lightning that took away the sunshine; for women it was midnight at 12 noon.
Exploitation you swallowed women's wisdom, self-sufficiency has disappeared...
Women's life in the past was like living in hell. If you happened to be a woman in those days you would see yourself as a sad person. The world was like a prison for you. You were not even regarded as someone who could build up something and develop the country. There was nothing you could say as a woman which was considered useful.
Women were seen as part of the luggage in the bandwaggon with men at the controls. They were not supposed to question in which direction they were going, even if it meant going to hell

Quotations from a poem and story by Rosemary Sibanda, Lupane and the Buhera group co-ordinated by Benjamin Murangwa
Sketch by C. Hodzi



The Fight Is Ours

Lalla Ben Barka is the Coordinator of the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) and head of the Women's Program Division of the National Functional Literacy and Applied Linguistics Committee (DNAFLA) of Mali, West Africa. The following is part of a presentation that Lalla made at the recent AALAE conference on "The Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa."



Although illiteracy is high in French-speaking Africa--especially among women--the picture is not so bleak when we consider some recent positive developments. the governments in the region are increasing funds available for programs, new initiatives are being developed, and there has been progress in pedagogy and linguistics. AALAE's work has led to greater cooperation between countries, and has increased our awareness of the specific problems facing the region and potential solutions.

The development of national organizations to coordinate adult education activities is bound to strengthen the movement in Africa--and our enthusiasm. But we are cautious. Even though there are researchers, technicians and educators fighting for adult education, many problems still need to be tackled. By that I mean not only traditions, and economic and health problems, but also a lack of will on the part of the ruling class which does not want to encourage the emergence of certain social classes. Often, this elite is backed by a middle class which takes advantage of its administrative powers.

I cannot keep silent about the exploitation of one group by another: I'm talking about women, who have ridiculously little access to education. No one ignores this now. It has been so widely talked about that everyone--even the extreme conservatives--are starting to mention the need to educate women. Different theories and strategies have been developed, and new technologies have been introduced to alleviate women's chores and give them time to attend literacy classes. But these have other results. For example, carts have been introduced into the villages, and they have been handy in helping women to gather wood. But women say when they were gathering wood by hand they worked together and it was a time to share their secrets. Women have more free time, but unfortunately it has not been used to educate them. Instead, they are helping their husbands in the fields.

Then it was thought that the situation could be corrected by identifying and helping women to express their real needs. The new catch-phrase was "income-generating activities." Knitting and sewing here, soap-making and dyeing there, and "Why not grow some vegetables? It's healthy for the mother and the child." But the reality is different. In Africa women sometimes grow more than half of the cereal crops. But when it comes time to develop projects, women are not involved in the process. This is usually explained with the social argument: "We must not disrupt the community system, the traditions. That would generate a revolution, or worse, anarchy. We have to go slowly, step by step." Meanwhile there are more and more slogans.

Women's issues are fashionable. Creating a women's project is enough to get the attention of funders. Funders are interested because they want to justify their investments internationally. It looks good to have a project for women in your program. It looks good to subsidize a project aimed at improving women's lives.

But we are not fools. We are certainly interested in these opportunities. We want to grab them. But we do not want to be manipulated. What we are looking for is grassroots mobilization. Each woman in her own home needs to have time to stand back and think about her lot, and make decisions about her life and the life of her family. We want each woman to know that we stand behind her, whether she hides behind the veil, is confined in her kitchen, is imprisoned, or raises her children by herself. And that's why we as women--from Africa, Asia, North America, Europe and Latin America--we want to build up this solidarity so that our sisters, particularly those in South Africa and Namibia, do not feel isolated in their fight for freedom. The fight is ours and we shall win. God bless you.

Lalla Ben-Barka, DNAFLA-MEM
BP62
Bamako
Mali, West Africa

Making Our Voices Heard

SPEAK is a magazine for women produced by a women's collective in South Africa. The following article is based on discussions at a small meeting of women educators at the ICAE seminar in Zimbabwe in February 1989, where Karen Hurt of the SPEAK collective talked about their work.

I'm one person from a collective of seven women who together publish SPEAK, a magazine for women. Three of us are full-time employees and four of us are volunteers. We started SPEAK in 1982. At that time a women's group of activists from different areas and townships used to meet. They wanted to get together to talk about the problems they faced as women and the problems they were facing organizing women. From that group emerged the idea of a newsletter and the newsletter was called SPEAK. We printed 200 copies of our first issue and our target group was mainly women activists. Now we come out every two months and print 9000 copies. Our target is working-class women and men.

SPEAK is based on a very strong sense that women's issues have to be taken seriously within the broad democratic movement. Because we know that if they are not taken up now, and if people don't start addressing them, liberation will come and women will still be saying "The nation will never be free until the women are free." There's a sense that it is quite urgent to raise many issues, from women getting beaten up by their husbands to health issues. For example there's the fact that the highest cause of death among black women is cervical cancer, which is a curable disease if it is detected in the early stages. And the struggles of women in trade unions, the struggles against sexual harassment, and so many things

Sanna Naidoo

ranging from personal to very obviously political issues.

In the beginning all of us who were working on the magazine had full-time jobs and brought out SPEAK in our spare time. We found it quite hard because the demand for SPEAK was growing and members of the collective started to have children and more children and the time just shrunk. We reached a point where we realized if we were really going to make an impact we had to publish regularly, and we needed full-time people to get it out on time and distribute it properly.

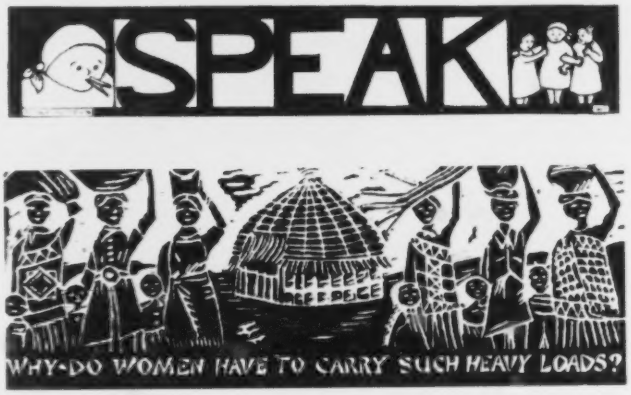
One of the problems of coming out so irregularly was that sometimes people would say, "Oh SPEAK is still around" in a surprised way. So we decided that SPEAK should be around much more. In 1986 we were eventually able to open an office and to employ two people. I was one of the first employees and then later that year another woman was employed as well. The composition of the collective is a cross-race one.

But there's a big problem with funding. We're so dependent on funding and the South African state would like to crush that funding. We live with quite a sense of insecurity.

Right from the outset we brought out SPEAK in Zulu and English. We wanted both to be as accessible as possible, the language simply written with lots of drawings and photographs that women could identify with. And short articles that women who have so little time to read anyway would it. Even women who can't read can find it interesting because there are lots of drawings and photos.

We put out the English and Zulu versions separately. It's like bringing out two issues every two months. And it is expensive. We've never really discussed putting English and Zulu into the same publication because there have been other publications brought out in that way and the response hasn't been that good. It's distracting having both languages, at least that's our feeling. Our project originated in Durban which is in Natal province, where English and Zulu are the main languages. We now have an office in Johannesburg and people are starting to say why don't you have it in other languages as well.

We think that as much as possible the ideas that come through SPEAK should be written in the way that women express them. Through interviews you get how people speak. People get very excited when you go back to them and they read their words as they said them. I think SPEAK is accessible because it is conversational. But the other thing is that we've forced ourselves to learn to write simply. We've learned from people in the literacy world. They've evaluated SPEAK and pointed out so many obvious things. Our language has changed quite dramatically.



We have a very positive relationship with different unions in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In fact most of our distribution takes place through the unions and community organizations.

In terms of identifying the issues for our articles--we sell SPEAK at trade union and community meetings, particularly on the weekends when there are always a lot of meetings going on. We go to these meetings and we often pick up ideas. We know the people in the organizations, and we are always asking "Is there anything happening which we can write about?"

And of course over time you build up credibility and people support you and ask for the magazine. If we want to interview women in a particular union we go through the union structures, and once we've pulled an article together through interviews then we take it back to the organization we've been working with, for them to read before we publish it. I think that points out the difference between us and the commercial press. We see ourselves as accountable.

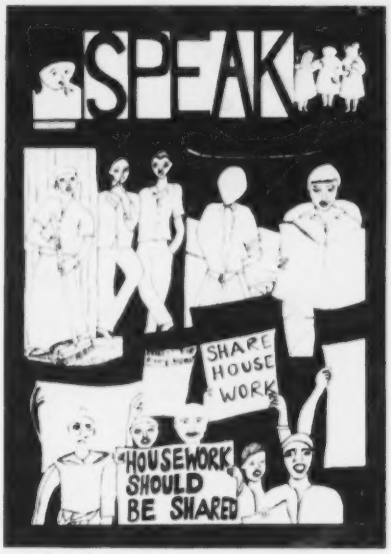
Because of where we are based, our focus has tended to be on urban communities and trade unions. We are very conscious of the fact that we don't have much information of interest to rural women, although we do try. It's difficult because it depends on who you are targetting and where your distribution is. We don't have the capacity at this stage to do extensive distribution in the rural areas, because of time and cost. We are still trying to consolidate our distribution in urban areas.

We don't send any free copies other than to the organizations with which we swap. We have one subscription rate for workers, unemployed and students and then higher donor subscriptions.

SPEAK includes different types of material. We're trying to encourage women to submit poetry, and that's taken off quite nicely. Women see poems by other women they know and they say, "I also write poetry." Another area is documenting women's personal

life stories, the kinds of problems that they've had, and their hopes for the future--what South African women would like to see in a future South Africa.

We also have a section on health which we see as an important part of empowerment, having knowledge about how women's bodies work. We want to promote a sense that health is a right and that doctors don't own your bodies and that you can understand so many of those things that are a mystery to you. We look at health provision in South Africa in relation to apartheid and in relation to a health system that is increasingly being privatized and put beyond the reach of people.



We've recently started an international section. Lots of intellectuals have books on women in Cuba and women in Nicaragua on their bookshelves. They get dusty and the information doesn't get out. Our idea is to link up South African women with women in other countries so that there is a sense of the struggles taking place everywhere. But it also hard writing about struggles in other countries because you feel as if you have to explain the whole context. In fact the women in other countries series has done quite well. Some of the unions have made copies, especially on Cuba and Mozambique, and use them in educational programs.

SPEAK is used quite a lot in schools and education programs. In fact I'm sure it's used much more than we actually know. We often bump into people and they say "By the way we used your health section" or some other piece.

Of course we've got lots of problems in SPEAK as well. We all try to be able to do everything, design, layout, writing and editing and distribution, although it is mainly the full-time employees who work at interviewing and working with groups and writing up stories. We started out with the sense that everybody must be able do everything but as SPEAK has grown--and now that we've got a new office office in Johannesburg as well as the original one in Durban--we're just not coping. There's chronic burnout. So we're going to do a serious evaluation of the project. We really need that. We can't keep operating as a collective where everything is shared because it's not a good use of your time and you miss your deadlines. And so we're having a big evaluation in February to look at how the collective can work together in the best possible way but also be productive and efficient. We have internal evaluations twice a year, in July and December. But for this major evaluation we feel that we need the skills of somebody who has had experience in organizations like ours but who has insights into management of projects, and who can look at our problems from the outside. Somebody who can help us sit down and say we're trying to achieve too much or we've got to change our method. We're sure that the evaluation will create a whole lot of trauma but we're quite committed to doing it.

The other thing that I wanted to mention is that SPEAK has a serious commitment to passing on and developing media skills to women outside of our group. We work with women's organizations. For example, the Natal Organization of Women have started a media group and SPEAK is spending time with them in a consistent way to develop media skills, from banner-making to badge-making, pamphlet writing and so on.

We believe that when you're part of a small collective you become very skilled yourselves, but one has to pass that on at some stage so that other women and organizations can learn and be able to be creative. And also we have helped with media skills training in some of the unions. We see that as an important part of our work.

SPEAK does not aim to organize women, we are not a mass-based women's organization. We see that as the role of the trade union movement and mass-based women's organizations. We see ourselves primarily as a grouping of people producing a publication. And while we're not directly affiliated to a particular women's group or trade union, our political allegiances are very clear in relation to the United Democratic Front (UDF) and COSATU. The one role that SPEAK does play in organizing is putting out pamphlets and that kind of thing. It's difficult, especially as volunteers are having less and less time. But that support media work is important. What happens if your doing an article with a group or trade union and there is a strike on? It's hard not to offer our skills when we see SPEAK's role as supporting those struggles.

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REFUGEE WOMEN IN CANADA

In recent years the Canadian government has passed legislation to severely restrict the number of refugees who can come into the country, and make it an offence for Canadians to help refugees enter Canada. New Experiences for Refugee Women (NEW) is a Toronto-based community organization that does educational work with Latin American refugees. This article is based on NEW's publications and on recent discussions Carol-Anne O'Brien of *Voices Rising* had with Mireya González, Noemi García and other members of NEW.

photo: Mireya González

In some countries of Central and South America, political and economic crises have resulted in brutal violence and repression that is forcing women, men and children to leave their homelands. Many have been seeking refuge in Canada, where language and cultural differences and discrimination isolate them from the rest of society. Although all who come experience difficulties as new immigrants, it is the women who have the greatest obstacles to overcome. Among them are mothers and widows who have been forced to leave their families behind or who are still coping with the shock of bereavement. Some are recovering from experiences of torture in prison. All of the women have come from unstable and violent situations.

In spite of this, refugee women bear the responsibility of holding their families together during the transition time, without the support of their community at home. Their traditional role as women is challenged by Canadian cultural expectations and by circumstances that force them to become the breadwinner or the sole parent. They must work but many do not speak English and their skills are not acknowledged by Canadian employers. Their access to English classes is limited by government regulations. All of these struggles are an incredible drain on their energies.

Founded in 1983, NEW's goal is to assist Latin American refugee women with their economic, social and cultural integration into Canada's multicultural society. NEW offers them a place to share their experiences and lose the fear that they are alone. NEW sees their role as not just providing information and training but a supportive environment.

A priority is to increase oral and written English language proficiency to allow participants to find and keep the jobs they desire and to communicate effectively in day-to-day situations. NEW also focusses on enabling participants to regain their confidence and self-esteem by providing the information, support and social skills necessary to take control of their lives. Another objective is to provide the women with individual support, counselling and referral to deal with personal and family problems and to facilitate their participation in NEW. NEW also works to enable Latin American refugee women to enter and function successfully in the Canadian labour force.

NEW is run by a board of community representatives and a staff collective composed of eight women, four full-time workers and four part-timers. Their work is complemented by about 25 volunteers who mainly help with English language training.

NEW is funded by the Canadian federal government under a special program for so-called "severely employment disadvantaged" people. NEW starts a training session with a new group of women every three to four

months. Participants go through a six month program--three months of training at NEW and then three months of on-the-job training at placements which NEW has found for them. Throughout the program the women recieve a salary--the legal minimum wage--as well as free passes for the public transit system and an allowance for new clothing for interviews.

NEW used to be able to accept 15 women in each session, but funds have been slowly reduced so that they can now accept only about 12-13. To be eligible under the government's criteria, participants must be unemployed or working less than 15 hours a week. The government also requires that participants have already been accepted as emigrants, which means that women who are in the midst of the long-drawn process of claiming offical "refugee status" cannot join NEW's program. Another cutback that the organization really regrets is that in the past they were able to cover the costs of daycare for the first part of the program. NEW doesn't receive those funds anymore and now they can only help women to find daycare and apply for government daycare subsidies.

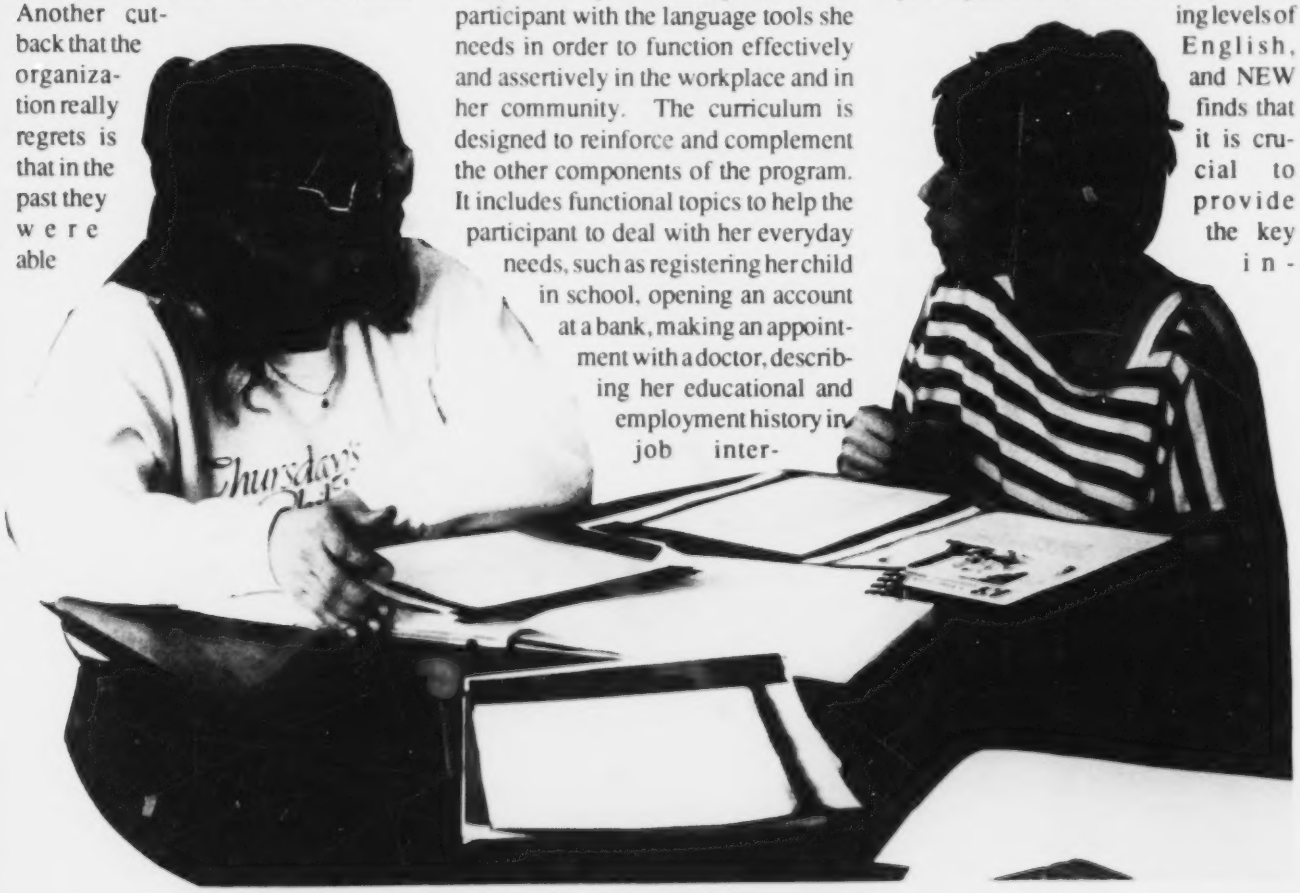
Participants hear about NEW through the centre's outreach to different communities and organizations in Toronto. Most of the women are originally from from El Salvador and Guatemala, but some also come from South American countries like Argentina, Chile and Bolivia. The women come from varied backgrounds and have different skills and work experiences.

The first three months of the training program consists of English, orientation and information, employment preparation and vocational counselling, and personal counselling and referrals. The English language classes are held every morning and aim to provide each participant with the language tools she needs in order to function effectively and assertively in the workplace and in her community. The curriculum is designed to reinforce and complement the other components of the program. It includes functional topics to help the participant to deal with her everyday needs, such as registering her child in school, opening an account at a bank, making an appointment with a doctor, describing her educational and employment history in job interviews, and developing strategies to deal with breakdowns in communication, for example at work.

Language-experience exercises are used to improve skills in English by focussing on material that the women themselves have generated from their own lives and ideas. Films, music, and newspaper articles are often used as catalysts for discussion, and on many occasions the debates are lively and valuable.

Increasing their skills in English can be a first step forward in helping the women to be more independent so they don't have to rely on their husbands and children to translate or speak English for them. Gaining language skills also motivates the women to take on other challenges.

The other components of the training program are taught in Spanish. The participants often have widely differing levels of English, and NEW finds that it is crucial to provide the key in-



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formation in the employment preparation, vocational counselling and orientation classes in the women's mother tongue--to ensure that they can understand.

The employment preparation component of the program provides the participants with the tools they need to survive in the Canadian workforce, for example information about labour laws and their rights as workers. Skills in self-evaluation are introduced--identifying abilities and goals--and setting long and short-term goals.

This forms the basis for vocational counselling--individually and as a group. The staff work with each participant to draw up an action-plan to help her move systematically towards her goals. Many of the women were highly qualified in their home countries, as nurses, for example. But in order to take up those kinds of professions in Canada they need to pass licensing exams in English. So NEW encourages participants to set themselves short-term goals --such as learning English, settling their families or improving their financial situation--and long-term goals, which may involve passing licensing exams or taking training in a new area they are interested in.

The orientation program aims to provide the women with self-confidence in each area of their lives: as women, as wives, as mothers and as workers by using life-skills exercises to empower them to take on their responsibilities. The workshops also include health education, including sexuality, and Canada's history, geography, education system and immigration regulations.

Following the classroom training at NEW, each participant is found a placement for on-the-job training. This offers her the opportunity to experience the Canadian work environment and learn about a job she's interested in. Examples of the placements are offices, daycare centres, and stores. NEW tries to find placements in workplaces where there is some hope that the trainees will be taken on as permanent employees. They also look for employers who are open to working with refugee women and providing them with a supportive work environment. During the job training period, the participants come back to NEW once a month to share their experiences, evaluate what they are learning and help NEW to monitor their placements. NEW also goes to each workplace and does an in-house evaluation with the participant and the employer.

At the end of the 26-week program there is a graduation ceremony for the participants, who are presented with diplomas from the Board of Education and NEW. NEW is proud that their record has been very successful; 80-85 percent of the participants find jobs at the end of the program.

In every aspect of their work NEW's educational approach draws on popular education and group dynamics to ensure that the training program is participatory and empowering. An important focus is that the participants are encouraged to organize themselves as a group. Collective games are used help the women to get to know each other and to encourage them to explore their creativity. They learn what it means to work as a group, they share their experiences, and they support each other throughout the program, in their efforts to find work and in the challenges that face them in their jobs and at home. Most groups have continued to stay in touch with each other and some meet together from time to time. After all the experiences they've been through, most of the women value their family as the most important thing in their lives, and as a vital place to share and be renewed by their own culture. It's a very special achievement that the participants come to see NEW as an extension of their families and their cultural life.

New Experiences for Refugee Women
815 Danforth Avenue, Suite 406
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4J 1L2

J. Roby Kidd Award

Mohamed Lamine Bangoura of Guinea, West Africa, has been selected as winner of the ICAE's 1988 J. Roby Kidd Award. Mr. Bangoura received the award for his important contribution to functional literacy for women through the project he carried out for the "Cameroun Women's Literacy Centre." Mr. Bangoura was a literacy facilitator for a training and literacy project started on a small scale with 30 women from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Because of its success, this model will be used in 35 other locales throughout Guinea.

Two other educators received Citations of Honour. Nishat Farooq has worked for the past six years in the State Resource Centre in Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, India, preparing teaching and learning materials for adult illiterates. Tawfeez Hasan Tillawee, a Jordanian, has been working to eliminate illiteracy and to promote adult education for the past 25 years in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Roby Kidd had a special interest in attracting new people with new ideas to adult education. The aim of this Award is to encourage practioners in adult education by recognizing contributions of women and men which are recent and innovative. The Cdn$2,000 Award is offered to an individual or individuals, who in the opinion of peers, have made a particularly significant contribution to adult education at the local or national level.

The Women's Program would like to encourage women in the network to nominate women's educational groups or individual women educators and activists for the Award. The deadline each year is October 15th. Send names to:

J. Roby Kidd Award
ICAE
720 Bathurst St., Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 2R4.

Leadership Training and Consciousness Raising among Chicana Workers in the US

Kathy Kopinak

SINCE 1982, La Mujer Obrera (Working Woman) has been the principal project of El Centro Del Obrero Fronterizo (The Border Workers' Centre) in El Paso, a Texas city located on the Mexico-US border. Arising in 1976, Centro Obrero was an organization formed by Chicano (Mexican-American) workers and students to support their people's struggles. Its members were part of the Chicano movement, the most recently organized resistance that Americans of Mexican origin have raised to their colonization within the United States. El Paso is part of one of the poorest regions of the US. Legislation guaranteeing workers the "right to work" has kept unions very weak, so that wages, health and safety provisions, and job security won by workers in other parts of the world are unknown here. Neither has the government developed welfare measures which would redistribute wealth in order to guarantee a minimum standard of living.

Puerto Rico Libre

The historically depressed situation of workers in Texas has become even more precarious since 1966, when an export processing zone was formed on the south side of the Mexico-US border. In urban complexes such as El Paso (US) and Juarez (Mexico) a system of "twin plants" has arisen, in which companies producing garments and electronic equipment maintain the smallest possible facilities in the US side of the border, while moving as much production as possible to the Mexican side, where wages are eight times less. Those paid the lowest wages on both sides of the border are Spanish-speaking women.

Cecilia Rodriguez and Pat Marin were among the founding members of Centro Obrero in 1976 when it opened to help people in Segundo Barrio (Second Ward) with, for example, unemployment claims, housing evictions and immigration difficulties. This city ward in El Paso has always been the poorest and has acted as a receiving area for Mexican immigrants. Employers have used it as a source of plentiful, cheap, unorganized labour. When it became clear that most of the Centro's clients were Segundo Barrio women who worked in small non-union sweatshops, Rodriguez, Marin and some of the other founding members directed most of their energies to them, thereby forming La Mujer Obrera in 1982.

The empowerment of women workers was initially conceived as a process whereby they could gain greater control over their workplace, union and family. The three areas of focus when La Mujer Obrera started were: 1) service--to respond to workers' immediate economic needs; 2) leadership development--to assist women in dealing with their triple oppression as workers,

women and Chicanas; and 3) organization--workers' strength would come from their membership in an organized group.

As the director of La Mujer Obrera, Rodriguez is not interested in simply paying lip service to the idea of leadership development without first making it clear that it requires time, experience and growth. She recognizes that this is a slowly accumulating process which cannot be achieved through linear strategies for mobilizing "masses" into the streets. The development of leadership among women of colour must first be based on a profound respect for culture. Neither can leadership and assertiveness training be accomplished apart from the other political goals of the organization.

An example of this practical integration was the English language training project of 1984, in which language education was provided as a service which allowed members to improve their skills to cope specifically with workplace pressures. Students learned repertoires which gave them some of the initiative in shop floor interactions with supervisors, for example words, phrases, tone of voice and delivery styles that indicated that piece work was not being properly administered by the factory or that the worker did not want to work overtime. The completion of this class was especially celebrated since students attended after a full working day and the teacher was a volunteer.

The centre also implemented its set of goals around leadership and assertiveness training through consciousness raising in workshops and conferences. As early as 1982, they developed educational materials which focussed on the role of sexual discrimination in the workplace, the economic manifestations of sexism, revaluing domestic labour, and the problematic aspects of women's relationships with men. La Mujer Obrera, along with other organizations, held educational forums on models of parenting in 1982 and conferences on child abuse in 1983. In 1986, they jointly organized the first International Women's Day Conference for Mexican women and Chicanas in the Rio Grande Valley. They held workshops on immigration, health care, child abuse and parenting.

This kind of consciousness raising has become an ongoing part of the Centre's activities, but the magnitude of this achievement should not be underestimated by the brevity of this article. Those facilitating the consciousness raising had to develop their own Spanish language materials, revaluing their Mexican heritage. This was made more difficult by both the racism of some white feminists and the accusation of the part of some Chicanos that the identification of Chicanas primarily as women is divisive and a sign of being sold out.

The very organizational structure of La Mujer Obrera also facilitated the development of leadership skills. From the beginning of the project, the emphasis has been on a collective approach to problem solving so that dependency on the Centre and its personnel is not perpetuated. Members are employed in several different sweatshops and make their workplace concerns central to their activities on the committees of the Centre. This intense membership involvement has been reflected in the content of the newsletter, in articles containing information relevant to ongoing conflicts with factory owners. When workers suspected that they were not getting paid for all of the piece work they had completed, articles appeared showing how they could keep a daily record of the amount produced. In this way, they learned how to collect evidence to prove they were being underpaid. In the same issue were biographies of El Paso garment workers who had persevered and transcended great obstacles. A featured column includes personal accounts of the life experiences of contemporary workers which helps the reader understand that her problems are not only her

Correspondencia, Mexico

own, but also shared by many other Chicanas.

Over the last seven years, La Mujer Obrera has moved forward with great care, providing services and giving support with problems identified by the membership. When Pat Marin and Cecilia Rodriguez began, they realized that if non-unionized garment workers were to organize themselves, they would need support. The low wages of $70-80 per week simply do not give the workers the resources to start building their own organizations. Thus the Centre opened as a multipurpose service agency, offering English language classes, referrals to other social agencies and legal services.

La Mujer Obrera set up Independent Worker Committees in any factory where they had sufficient members. When workers in one factory went on a spontaneous strike in September of 1985, La Mujer Obrera helped them to represent themselves and structured the Independent Worker Committees into an independent association of garment workers. After this strike, the workers won several Labour Board rulings, securing unemployment benefits and back pay that the factory owners tried to deny them.

In this way, the Centre has developed from an organization which used to spend much time satisfying workers' immediate needs, to one which is now run by the workers themselves. Some of those who received services in the early days of the organization and who participated in leadership training and consciousness raising were most active in the strike and organization of 1985. They are now the ones who run La Mujer Obrera. This had freed up some of Rodriguez's time to do more political work. Marin is in the process of implementing a language education and reskilling program for displaced workers at El Paso Community College.

The long-range goal of La Mujer Obrera is the development of a self-sufficient leadership training centre which will provide supportive services and activities for low-income working women. Efforts to build this centre have been fraught with difficulties because of the organization's lack of capital and the general poverty of the community. This is the case even though they have been politically successful, with an ever increasing membership and recognition from the larger community as a leading organization through which workers attempt to cope with the deepening economic crisis. At the time of writing this article, they continue working towards this goal.

Kathy Kopinak is a sociologist at King's College, University of Western Ontario, Canada. This article is part of a larger work on women organizing on the Mexican-American border. You can write to the Centre at :

La Mujer Obrera
P.O. Box 3975
El Paso, Texas 79923
USA.

1988 Nabila Breir Award

A project entitled "Training and Participation of Village Women in Pre-School Education" is the 1988 recipient of the Nabila Breir Award. This West Bank-based programme provides for village women from all-women committees and other voluntary networks to become involved and trained, from a self-help perspective, to take charge of services for pre-school education and upgrade their quality. This is done through:

1. The training of pre-school supervisors and teacher-trainers according to Piaget's principle of cognitive development. The supervisors are developing the philosophy and practice of pre-school teachers through an interactive approach, where the supervisor's role is to support and facilitate the teacher's efforts to develop her professional and personal philosophy as well as her competence.
2. Education and curriculum materials for pre-school teacher training are being developed and produced as an integral part of the training process.

The Nabila Breir Award was established by the ICAE in 1387 in memory of Nabila Breir, a Palestinian activist who was murdered in Beirut. Nabila was an educator who worked with UNICEF and had played a key role in setting up daycare centres, literacy classes and health care clinics in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon. She had also been active in the ICAE.

Following Nabila's death, a fund was set up for a yearly award that recognizes organizations doing innovative educational work for Palestinian women. The objectives of the award are: to support women's educational programmes aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of Palestinian communities, and the quality of life and self-sufficiency of women in particular; to provide opportunities for Palestinian women grassroots educators to exchange educational experiences with women educators from other regions; and to provide opportunities for Palestinian women educators to participate in ICAE's regional and international workshops, seminars and conferences.

Women's and other educational organizations are encouraged to submit nominations to the ICAE, giving a brief history and description of the organization. Nominations should be received by July 1st of each year, and selections are made in October. Send nominations to:

ICAE
720 Bathurst St., Suite 500
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 2R4

Letters from the Network

Belize

Thank you for the copy of *Voices Rising*. We will be very happy to set up an exchange of our publications.

Please also find enclosed a leaflet describing SPEAR. Although we do not have a specific women's programme, in addition to my responsibility as co-ordinator of the popular education programme, I am responsible for ensuring that the organization addresses women's issues. At present, we are collaborating with two sister non-governmental organizations in setting up and conducting education programmes with the women's groups that they are working with. At the same time we work closely with the Belize Organization for Women and Development (BOWAND) of which I am the current president.

I read the issue of *Voices Rising* with great pleasure and look forward to future issues! One of the interesting things for me was that I knew a couple of the women and although we are not always in touch it was good to read more about them and what they were doing in addition to learning more about what other sister popular educators were

saying and doing. Although I did not attend the workshop [Montreal, November, 1987] on which the issue focussed, I got a very good sense of it. I particularly liked the style of the many voices rising in the boxes. I think it highlights the strength in diversity.

I particularly want to endorse the concern raised about the absence of women of colour from the United States. This to my mind has been one of the biggest failings in international women's fora. Third World women have never been given much of an opportunity to interact with women like ourselves from Europe and North America, and while I understand the problem of getting funds for the sisters, I see it as an important challenge to the feminist movement.

I also find the resource section very useful. We need to know what materials exist, what materials are being developed and how to access them.

I look forward to hearing from you and staying in touch.

One Struggle,

Diane Haylock
Society for the Promotion of Education and Research (SPEAR)
P.O. Box 571
126 North Front Street
Belize City
Belize, Central America.

Malaysia

Thank you for sending us a copy of *Voices Rising*. We would like to receive it on a regular basis as there is much that we can learn from the experiences of other women. Reading the article on the Gregoria Apaza Centre in Bolivia [January 1989 issue] reminded us that we have a long way to go in Sarawak. Our work is only in its infancy. There is much to do and learn.

We were formed in 1985 and currently run a crisis phoneline for women in distress. We also have a resource centre for our members where they can get access to information and materials on a variety of women's issues.

As we enter into our fourth year, we are now evaluating our work and hope to formulate an outreach programme in

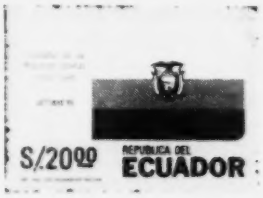
our community. We do not have any full-time staff, thus our time and energies are often very badly stretched. In spite of this our commitment and enthusiasm is high. We hope that *Voices Rising* will continue as an avenue where women can share with each other and we hope to learn much from it.

In solidarity,

Sarawak Women for Women Society
P.O. Box 551
Kuching, Sarawak
Malaysia

Ecuador

It was very nice for us to receive such a valuable package in the mail. The two newsletters arrived January 24, and on Saturday 28 we met in Esmeraldas, and the next day in Atacames. We wanted to discuss in a participatory fashion the message you sent us, dear sister, through *Voces que se levantan (Voices Rising)*.



The problem is that we cannot pay for a subscription because we are planning the closing ceremony of the sewing course we give, and we have to spend our money on diplomas and refreshments. After that we are planning to do training for vegetable growing. We are promoting your newsletter and in March we will tell you how many we need. Meanwhile I want to let you know what our sisters of the Centre said, "Answer soon, Adalfina. We are going to send a picture of our group, we want to go in a photo to Canada." Another women was so touched she told me, "I never thought they would pay attention to us in the (Quito) seminar." The three sisters from Atacames, I can't tell you how touched they were, so much that they want to work all winter to send their report to Canada. I think that you are planting a seed that is going to give excellent harvests. The fact that you sent us the newsletters without charge demonstrates the dynamics of your work and will undoubtedly generate follow-up which will be of benefit to many people and organizations.

For 1989 we are planning to grow vegetables and fruit. In our province, basic staples are scarce and prices are rising, and there is unemployment with all its effects on poor people. So we have decided to concentrate our energies on training in growing vegetables, crafts and nutrition.

In the first page of *Voces que se levantan* there is that article under the title "Sharing our Spirit" (April 1988). I think that the sister who wrote it has, inside herself, a piece of each one of us, because all of us are going through difficult moments in our intimate lives. Not all of us have the understanding of our loved ones when we want to give part of our time to search for solutions for people with serious problems. We don't have friendly help in advising, planning, smiling. Of course we are often alone. In spite of having husbands, children, groups that we organized, there are moments we stand alone and over and over we have to fight against that solitude.

Today, when your mail arrived, my husband said, "You must answer quickly. This doesn't happen everyday, receiving newsletters from Canada." So what do you think sisters, for eight years this man didn't want me to do popular training, and now he's not opposed anymore.

We wish the bulletin every success, and thanks again for including us on the subscription list.

Adalfina Ortiz
Centro Femenino Progresista de Esmeraldas
[Esmeraldas Progressive Women's Centre]
Quito 506 y 6 de Diciembre
Esmeraldas
Ecuador

❖ ❖ ❖

Sincere and warm greetings, from all the women of the Popular Education Centre, from the women of Ecuador and, especially from the suburban working women of Guayaquil.

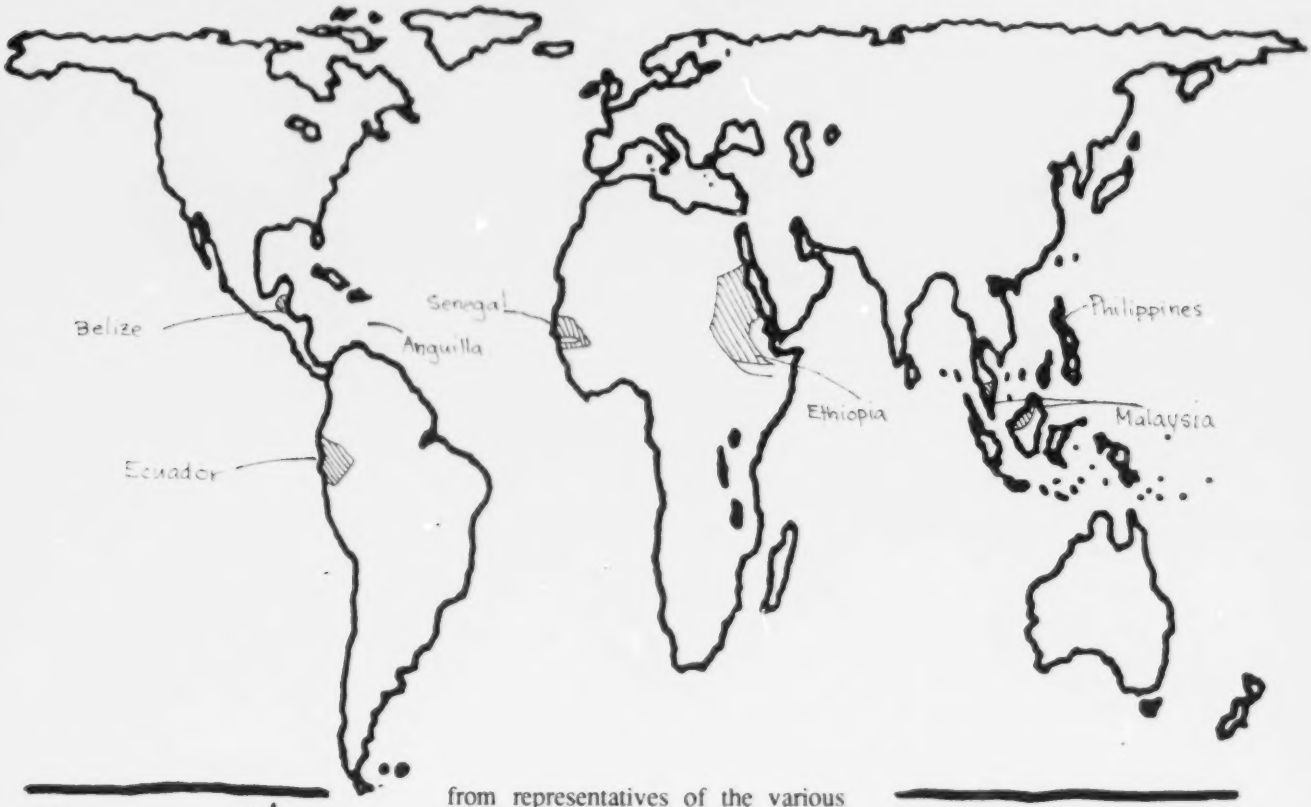
Because of a mail strike, we have had difficulties with communications. Sorry we couldn't write before.

Thanks for the visit to our centre (during the Quito seminar.) It helped to open new roads in women's organization, to share experiences and to discuss the women's issues around the world.

We also want to thank you for your letter and the explanations about the Women's Program's goals and work. We think it is very positive for us to know each other better so we can strengthen international solidarity and unity among women.

It was nice also to receive *Voces que se levantan* . We think it is an efficient means for sharing, analyzing and discussing popular education in the context of women's struggle for social change, and for the sharing of experiences.

Eva Caicedo
Women's group
Centro de Educacion Popular Guayas (CEP)
[Guayas Popular Education Centre]
Casilla 11146
Guayaquil
Ecuador



Anguilla

I have read Voices Rising and have found it very interesting and I would certainly like you to send me a copy on a regular basis. It would be means of putting us in touch with other women's groups in different parts of the world.

It would seem as whether we are First or Third World women we seem to have similar problems, women struggling for equality.

My group is the National Council of Women and is the "umbrella" organization whose members are drawn from representatives of the various women's organizations on the island, as well as women not attached to specific groups. The main goals of the National Council are to ensure full participation and integration of women in the building of our nation, and to establish closer ties with all women in Anguilla.

We feel it is only through closer ties and cooperation that we can achieve our objectives and ensure the full participation of our women. I would like very much to be part of your network. I would also like to share information and gain experience from other women's groups around the world. In my next letter I will be able to give you some news and activities of the group.

Best wishes,

Miriam Gumbs
Back Street
South Hill
Anguilla
Caribbean

Philippines

We are very much grateful for sending us a copy of Voices Rising. We are glad about the work the ICAE is doing. We are highly spirited to hear about it, as we believe that it is high time that broad links should be established among NGOs who work for the uplift of marginalized/exploited peoples through popular education. Furthermore, the problems (poverty, ill health, poor housing and so forth) besetting the Filipino workers, including women who are intertwined with other exploited people in the Third World and that of the transnational corporations who shamelessly suck the blood of our people in the guise of progress and free trade.

We would be more than happy if you would provide us with some information about the ICAE as our concentration is on workers' education and

health where the majority of our beneficiaries are women workers and workers' wives.

Thank you for including us on your mailing list. With best wishes for your continued success.

In solidarity,

Napoleon Genato
Program Director
St. Joseph Social Services
Room 205 Pelbel Building
2019 Shaw Boulevard
Pasig
Philippines

Thank you very much for sending a copy of Voices Rising. It is very educational. I translate some of your articles into the Filipino language and publish them in our quarterly magazine in Filipino. I must thank you for these educational articles.

Our organization will be ten years old in 1990. We have 16,700 active members from the 13 towns and 4 cities of Metro Manila, and 8 provinces around the Philippines. We meet every month with 200 members of the executive board who monitor for the central leadership the monthly activities.

We have only two goals: non-formal education and livelihood programs for the members. We are a service organization, we serve our members.

To implement the non-formal education program we hold ten training seminars a month in Metro Manila. We are able to reach at least 5,000 women yearly through these training seminars. We teach home management, herbal medicine, consumer and nutrition education, Philippines history and culture, cooking nutritious but inexpensive foods, etc. We also distribute herbal plants. To date we have distributed for free 15,000 herbal plants. We have already set up a herbal garden where we grow and propagate herbal seedlings for distribution. We also hold cooking sessions with the wives of foreign diplomats who teach us how to cook their food. We also have study tours of places of interest and history throughout the country. Thrice a year, we invite foreign diplomats to lecture us about their country. We also hold annual concerts on Philippine art and music.

Thank you again and we look forward to another copy of Voices Rising.

Sincerely yours,

Leonarda N. Camacho
Metro Manila Council of Women
Balikatan Movement
82-A Midland 11
Washington Street
Greenhills West
San Juan, Metro Manila
Philippines

Ethiopia

Thank you for your letter and *Voices Rising*. I regret that I had much work that hindered my answering your letter immediately.

I found the *Voices Rising* bulletin to have valuable experiences taken from all corners of the world. The bulletin initiates women and democratic educators to struggle for the betterment of women's world and make a conducive milieu for them. Voices Rising is a real mouthpiece of women at the world level.

My work is preparing cooperative education materials for literacy and post-literacy. Besides this I engage in adult education research. In our literacy campaign the majority of participants are women. Generally my work relates with women and *Voices Rising* is useful for my task.

International Literacy Year 1990 prepares the world community at large for a holy work. This holy work is an initiation to wage a practical war against illiteracy so as to reduce it to a very few percentage by the year 2000.

Really illiteracy has to be combatted because: it is the enemy of the people, it is darkness, it makes people unreceptive to new ideas and change, it hinders development, it exposes people to brutal exploitation and oppression, and it is also an obstacle to people participating fully in economic, social and cultural activities.

Briefly illiteracy is everything of all evil things. It could be eradicated by the combined efforts of the world, governmental and non-governmental organizations, internationally, regionally as well as nationally.

Sincerely yours,

Beyene Abraha
Department of Adult Education
P.O. Box 4921
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Senegal

I am a university student. I am of Peul origin and my father, who is polygamous, has three wives and about 30 children. I left my hometown when I was two years old to live with one of my aunts who was childless, and would go back to my village for the holidays.

When I read your magazine *A pleine voix [Voices Rising]* at a friend's house, I could not believe it. For a long time I have been deeply involved in women's movements, mostly to rebel against what my mother was going through in my family. She is oppressed, exploited, obedient, exhausted, as are all women in my country. Because the worst aspects of traditional society and Islam have been retained, the fate of Peul women is the saddest in Senegal, worse than the Woolofs, for example.

I was president of the Women's Board in my high school. However, the administration expelled me from the school because they felt I was preaching revolutionary ideas to the female students. My father claimed my mother was my accomplice even though she lived far away, and my mother and I had no place to go. I felt even more rebellious. I looked after children while taking evening classes and I graduated from high school.

At the moment, I am pursuing my education without a scholarship and without any help from my father, who thinks I am a pariah. Needless to say, my state is precarious. Last year, I spent almost all my free time with the women of my hometown. I did research on the need to liberate women economically and I organized debates on family planning. In spite of tremendous difficulties of lack of money or help of any kind, we even formed a group for women who were interested in sewing, dyeing material, weaving and embroidery.

This was a brief account of my aims and objectives. I do not think I can do much to free women as long as I am myself oppressed and dominated. I have a haunting problem, a sorrow which lies deep in my inner self. I was excised and married against my will at 15. For the first time in my life, something gives me hope, something interests me.

God bless women's groups. Let's gather our efforts for our freedom. Let's fight for freedom all the way.

All my love,

[name witheld]
Dakar
Senegal

Africa Exchange Project

In January of this year the Women's Program and the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE) co-sponsored a Women's Exchange Project in Harare, Zimbabwe, which brought together about 60 women (and a few men), from the networks of the ICAE and AALAE and from women's groups in and around the city. It took place during the executive meetings of the ICAE and AALAE and a conference organized by AALAE, on "The Future of Adult Education in Southern Africa", all of which took place in Harare.

The program included a reception for women educators and a fruitful day of discussion and exploration with presentations on the situation of women and women's education in Malaysia, Ecuador, the Gambia and Zimbabwe, followed by study visits with community projects in Harare. While very short, the exchange made it possible for women to share their experiences in working with women and their personal stories of struggle against oppression.

The exchange in Zimbabwe was the first phase of a longer international exchange project which will take place in November 1989 involving fifteen women working in the areas of literacy and health education, who will travel to meet with women in Mali and Tanzania. The participants will come from Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Latin America, North America, Europe and other countries in Africa.

Exchanges of this kind have been identified by women educators and activists as useful and important experiences for women who are actively working at the grassroots. Women who attended the leadership development seminar in Ecuador, last October, and others who were at the Feminist Challenge seminar held in Montreal, in October, 1987, identified opportunities to exchange with women in other regions as key to strengthening mutual support and the development of networks within and between regions. For more information about the exchanges, write to us at the Women's Program office in Toronto.

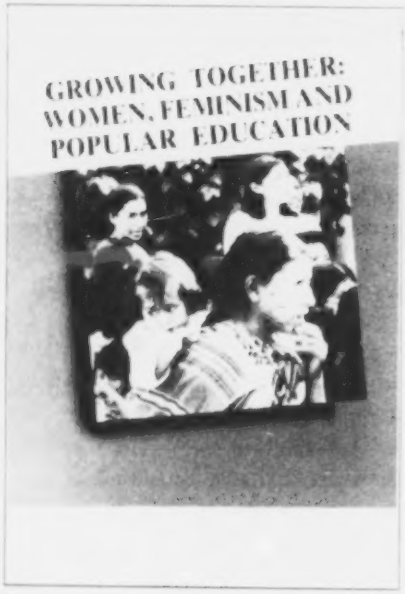
Resources

Growing Together: Women, Feminism and Popular Education

Women's Network, Latin American Council for Adult Education (CEAAL) and Isis International, Rome, Italy 1988. 94pp.

This valuable book is a collection of articles by Latin American women active in popular education. It includes articles on CEAAL's Women's Network, on feminism and popular education and on popular education practice in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela. Originally published in Spanish, this translation offers English-speaking audiences the opportunity to learn about the innovative work in Latin America in developing a vision and practice in popular education by and for women. As the introduction points out, "people's movements everywhere are finding that education is a crucial component of attempts to empower disenfranchised groups." Feminists and women's groups have begun to carry the struggle for women's empowerment into the popular education movement, developing a critique of existing popular education efforts and creating positive alternatives that explore the hidden realities of women's lives, and develop new visions of the concrete demands and organizational forms that best express women's needs.

Cost: US$6.00.
Available from: Isis International, Via San Saba 5, 00153 Rome, Italy.



Come Together. An Action Pack for Campaign on Legal Reforms for Women in Malaysia

All Women's Action Society (AWAM), Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

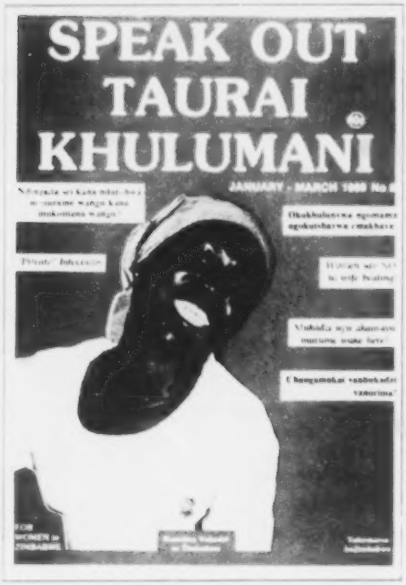
This kit aims to build awareness among women and women's groups about how women are discriminated against, develop analytical skills necessary for a critical understanding of the issues, motivate women and women's groups to act for change, and strengthen the campaign for legal reforms in Malaysia. The kit has two sections; one is composed of four illustated popular education booklets: Women and Work (16pp), Women and Family Law (16pp), Rape/ Sexual Assault (19pp), and Domestic Violence: Women Battering (12pp). The other section of the kit includes a Users' Guide and Tools for Action, leaflets which take off from the issues raised in the booklets and suggest ways to develop collective action.

Available from: All Women's Action Society (AWAM), c/o 114 Jalan SS 4/10, 43701 Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

SPEAK OUT

SPEAKOUT/TAURAI/KHULAMANI magazine is produced by the Women's Action Group in Zimbabwe, and comes out four times a year. In each issue the articles are published in English and two Zimbabwean languages, Shona and Ndebele. A recent issue focusses on violence against women and includes articles and a comic-strip about women who are being beaten by their husbands, on sexual harassment at work, and advice on how to get help. The issue also features an interview with the coordinator of the women's programme of the National Farmers Association who talks about her life, and a summary of a report on women in the cooperative movement in Zimbabwe.

Subscriptions: (Four issues/year) Other African countries US$10.00; Europe US$15.00; Asia US$17.00; elsewhere US$20.00.
Available from: SPEAK OUT, Box 135, Harare, Zimbabwe.



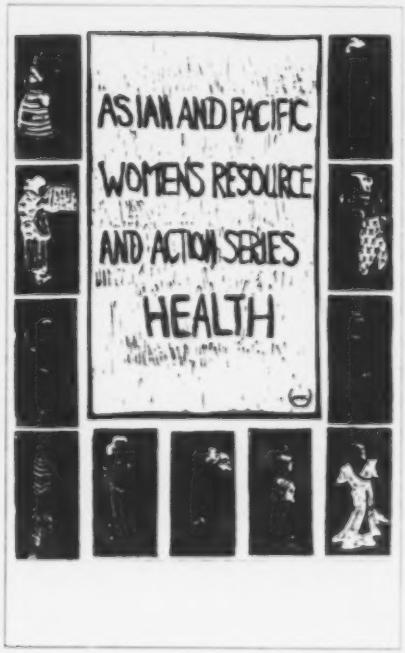
Resources

Asian and Pacific Women's Resource and Action Series: Health

Asian and Pacific Women's Resource Collection Network, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1989, 298pp.

This first publication of the Asian and Pacific Women's Resource and Action Series is a collection from women in the region of their thinking and experiences on a variety of issues critical to women's health. It includes sections on health care systems, maternal mortality, nutrition, work, control of reproduction, psychological health, violence against women, and AIDS. The book is intended for women and community groups, policy makers and researchers, and it is aimed at helping community groups to develop their analysis and strategies on women's health issues, extend their networking and build their resources. It includes an annotated bibliography, a 22-page listing of women's groups in the region, and an appendix with tables showing statistics on women in each country of the region in terms of poverty levels, literacy rates, maternal mortality, health expenditures by governments and other indicators.

Available from: Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Persiaran Duta, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



The Weave: Women's Popular Health Education Resource Guide

CUSO-Montreal Women's Health Group, Montreal, Canada, 1988, 27pp.

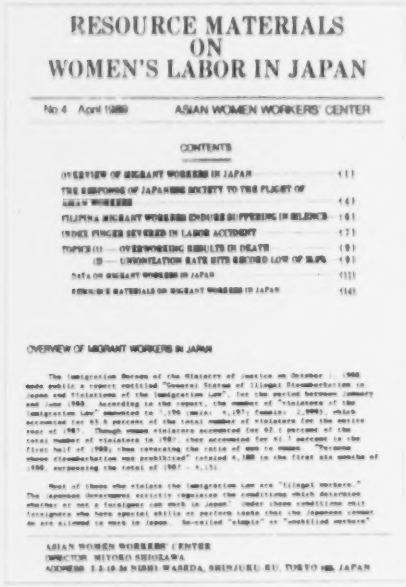
This booklet includes an introduction to popular health education, and listings of organizations and printed and audio-visual materials dealing with popular health education methods, women and pharmaceuticals, reproductive and sexual health, work, immigrant and refugee women's health, women and nutrition, general women's health resources and health education and community health resources. The focus is on both Canadian and international resources although the authors' goal is not to provide an exhaustive list. A second booklet is planned to cover women's health related to the environment, aging, violence and sexual assault, alternative medicine, primary health care in the third world, mental health, and issues particular to indigenous women, lesbians, adolescents and the disabled.

Available from: CUSO-Montreal, 180 est rue Ste-Catherine, Montreal, Quebec, H2X 1K9, Canada.

Resource Materials on Women's Labour in Japan

This newsletter is published once a year by the Asian Women Workers' Centre in Tokyo, and is a unique collection of articles and reports translated into English. The April 1989 issue focussed on migrant women workers in Japan with an overview of the situation of migrant workers--their frequent "illegal" status, Japanese men's participation in "sex tourism" in Asia, the migration of Asian women to work in the sex industry in Japan, violation of the workers' human rights, the economic relationship of Japan and its multinational corporations with Asia. The issue also features articles about the response of Japanese society to the plight of Asian workers, and the exploitation of Filipina workers in the sex industry.

Available from: Asian Women Workers' Center, 2-3-18-34 Nishi-Waseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169, Japan.


RESOURCE MATERIALS
ON
WOMEN'S LABOR IN JAPAN

No 4 April 1989 ASIAN WOMEN WORKERS' CENTER

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OVERVIEW OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN JAPAN

The Immigration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice on October 1, 1988 made public a report entitled "General Status of Illegal Disembarkation in Japan and Violations of the Immigration Law", for the period between January and June 1988. According to the report, the number of "violators of the Immigration Law" amounted to 7,159 (male: 4,187; female: 2,999), which accounted for 61.6 percent of the total number of violators for the entire year of 1987. Though women violators accounted for 42.1 percent of the total number of violators in 1987, they accounted for 51.7 percent in the first half of 1988, thus reversing the ratio of men to women. "Persons whose disembarkation was prohibited" totaled 6,188 in the first six months of 1988, surpassing the total of 1987 - 4,151.

Most of those who violate the Immigration Law are "illegal workers." The Japanese Government strictly regulates the conditions which determine whether or not a foreigner can work in Japan. Under these conditions only foreigners who have special skills or perform tasks that the Japanese consider are allowed to work in Japan. So-called "simple" or "unskilled workers"

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ADDRESS: 2-3-18-34 NISHI-WASEDA, SHINJUKU-KU, TOKYO 169, JAPAN

Resources

AGENDA. A Journal about Women and Gender

AGENDA is published twice yearly by a collective of South African women who aim to provide a forum for comment, discussion and debate on all aspects of women's lives, and specifically to attempt to understand the position of women within South African society. The editorial collective believes that women in South Africa experience exploitation and oppression on the basis of their class, race and gender, and struggle is needed on all of these fronts. Agenda No. 2 (1988) contains a number of articles focussing on the battle over consciousness--how organizations interpret and act on women's interest in certain issues, what organizations choose to politicise around and the gap between political statements and actual practices--as well as book reviews and brief reports on particular struggles.

Subscriptions: Individuals US$20.00, Institutions US$40.00.
Available from: AGENDA, P.O. Box 37432, Overport, 4067 Durban, South Africa.

Beyond Labour Issues. Women workers in Asia

Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Hongkong, 70pp.

This book is a report of a conference that CAW organized in Hongkong in October 1987 with about 30 women organizers from all over Asia to share their work and experiences concerning women workers. The theme of the conference was "Beyond Labour Issues", to signify how women workers need to question the way they compartmentalize their work lives and their private family lives. The report includes chapters on each of the workshops and plenaries, brief case studies from five Asian countries, and a conclusion reviewing the final plenary which looked at planning and networking and strategies and visions.

Available from: Committee for Asian Women, 57 Peking Road 4/F, Kowloon, Hongkong.

Women Working Worldwide: Workers Handbook

Women Working Worldwide is seeking help with its project to produce a handbook for women working and/or organizing in the global micro-electronics industry.

The aim of the project is to gather information on the organizing actions of women workers in order to support and strengthen the struggles of workers organizing for basic rights and better conditions of employment. Workers' struggles are strengthened by learning from each others' experiences, particularly in an industry such as micro-electronics, which is located in many countries and dominated by multinational companies. For this reason, the book will be distributed as widely as possible amongst organizations working in support of women in the industry.

The handbook will emphasize attempts by women to organize as workers within the industry--through trade unions, women's groups or centres, or community or church organizations. We are interested in all cases, whether or not they have been successful. Our main interest is how women have attempted to organize, the particular strategies and tactics they have used and what they have learned from their experiences.

We recognize that many women are working and organizing in difficult and repressive conditions. Therefore, where requested, we will guarantee anonymity.

Can you help us in any one of the following ways: locating examples of organizing actions that have taken place; putting us in contact with groups of women workers; interviewing current and former employees of micro-electronics companies; sending us reports of worker' attempts to organize; and translation of documents into English.

In order to ensure accessibility, the handbook will be published in an economical format. Proceeds from the sale of the English edition will be used to publish the book in other languages.

Contact:

Frances Ellery
Project Coordinator
Women Working Worldwide
Box 92
190 Upper Street
London N1 1RQ
England

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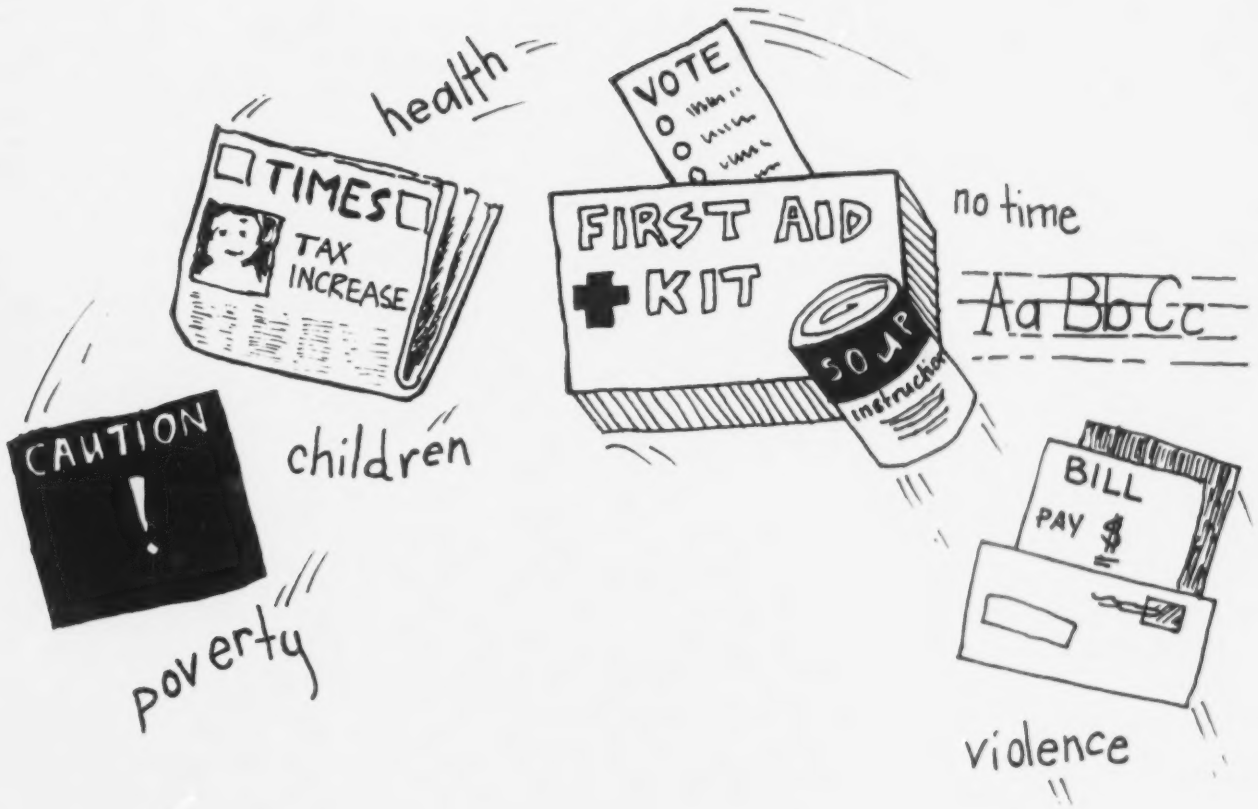
A BULLETIN ABOUT WOMEN AND POPULAR EDUCATION



THE LITERACY ISSUE:

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES on READING & WRITING

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JANUARY /FEBRUARY 1990

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Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, and aims to: promote the sharing of experiences, provide a forum for debate and discussion of key issues for women educators, share information on useful resources, and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face in their daily lives.

The ICAE's Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and empowerment of women.

The Women's Program office is located in Toronto, Canada with a staff of three full-time workers. Special projects are coordinated by key contact groups and individuals in different regions. Overall direction and planning is provided by an international advisory committee.

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is an international non-governmental organization with national member associations in over 90 countries, and networks in a variety of areas, including : peace, literacy, community health and popular education, worker's education, and participatory research as well as the Women's Program. All networks are decentralized and coordinated by individuals and groups in different regions of the world.

The following agencies provided support to this issue of *Voices Rising*: SIDA, Finnida, NORAD, NOVIB, and the World Council of Churches.

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THE LITERACY ISSUE:
Feminist Perspectives on Reading and Writing

EDITORIAL

In what ways is literacy an issue for women? What are the practical and theoretical implications of a gender perspective in this field of educational work? These are the broad questions addressed by the articles, reviews and resources in this special issue of *Voices Rising*. 1990, International Literacy Year, and the new decade which it heralds, presents an opportunity for reflection on the feminist challenge to literacy theory and practice, for learning from the ways in which literacy workers are reformulating literacy as a women's issue and for ensuring that this re-visioning is taken up more broadly within our movement.

One recurring theme in the following pages is that of critique--the exposure by women practitioners and learners of the multiple ways women have been excluded from "literacy"--from its achievements, its programs, its measurements, its conceptualization, from definitions of its relevance and meaning, from its methodologies and strategies. A second theme, not surprisingly, is innovation--the diverse and creative attempts to redress women's marginalization and to integrate women's interests and perspectives into the very meaning of the term "literacy" (and its obverse, "illiteracy"), into pedagogies, into the personal desires and political possibilities of literacy acquisition. The examples we include represent but a sprinkling of the creative energy and skill literacy practitioners and learners are bringing to this field.

There has been a shift over recent years in how questions of women and literacy are being posed, one that parallels the broader feminist critique of education. Earlier feminist questioning was very practical, and drew attention to the high incidence of what is officially defined as "illiteracy" amongst women, as opposed to men, in most countries; the logistical difficulties women face in even attending school or adult literacy classes; the threats of violence, physical and psychological, that women are often subject to when striving to become literate; and the irrelevance of the content of many literacy programs to the daily realities and needs of women's lives. Literacy programs were shown to reinforce oppressive and limiting gender stereotypes and to oftentimes rely on teaching and learning practices that further silence and discourage women. These revelations and the issues they raise for literacy workers and programs are summarised in "Literacy, A Tool for Empowerment of Women?" by Agneta Lind.

Inevitably, the illumination of women's specific experience of literacy and illiteracy as distinct from that of men led to a more profound critique. The emphasis shifted away from attempting to understand literacy as a problem for/of women--with an implicit notion that illiteracy, like poverty, are ultimately the "fault" of those who experience them. There is now more concern to understand the ideological assumptions and judgements loaded into the concepts of "literacy" and "illiteracy" in different social contexts, and within that to see how women are silenced by and precluded from these social constructions of what it means to be "literate." In this way literacy/illiteracy become part of the process of organizing and reinforcing gender, race and class subordination.

The promotion of literacy--and the promise that it holds out--is couched differently depending on social and political circumstances. In the ideology of capitalist industrialized countries, literacy is presumed to offer "individual advancement," or in more progressive terms, "personal empowerment." But as feminists are showing, the relationship between the acquisition of reading and writing skills and empowerment is different for women than for men, and depends, among other things, on increased economic opportunity and a reorganization of domestic relations. In countries of the South, the attempts at "functional literacy" often associated with national development policies often further disadvantage women whose lives are centred in the "non-productive" sphere (see Lind). We've also seen in recent years how gender relations limit possibilities for women's empowerment even in situations where literacy is presented as an aspect of popular political mobilization--such as within oppositional social movements or pre-and post-revolutionary moments (see "Khulumani Makhosikazi" from South Africa and "Tomorrow Will Be Different" from Chile).

This is not to suggest that learning to read and write, or more broadly, the acquisition of literacy, is not empowering for women--individually and collectively. But neither can it be taken for granted. It is in the tension between the potential and the limitations of literacy that feminist literacy workers and women learners face a major challenge, finding ways to work together to redefine how--in each specific social context--literacy can embrace and further women's practi-

cal and strategic gender interests. Only from this base we can expect to develop approaches to literacy that are truly empowering for women and men.

After Agneta Lind's overview, the articles in the first section critically explore the implications of gender in specific literacy programs in South Africa, Chile, and Canada. They show the interrelationship of "illiteracy" with race and class as well as gender, and situate the struggle for literacy within broader struggles for social transformation.

The second section includes descriptions of literacy training pedagogies, methodologies and materials. These provide but a glimpse of the innovative approaches and tools being developed in various parts of the world to facilitate the questioning of gender oppression.

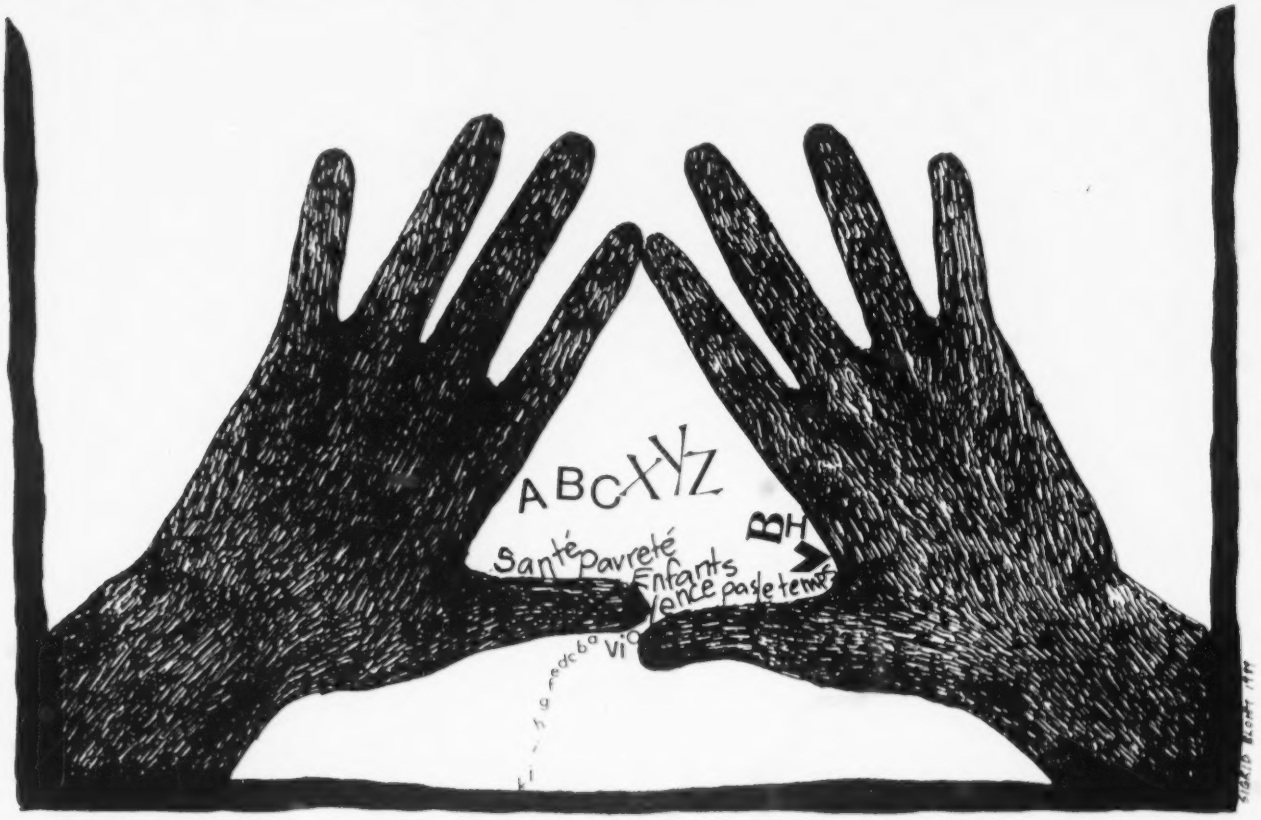
The special section for International Literacy Year sets out a series of challenges to the direction of literacy programming and policy-making. These represent some of the critical re-thinking of literacy which has been given new impetus in recent years by feminist theory and practice. International Literacy Year will no doubt stimulate further evaluation of both official and non-governmental initiatives. We look forward to hearing your views.

We're well aware that despite the many complex issues raised in the pages of this issue, many others are not addressed or named. Like in so many areas of women's popular education, our written reflections are scarce compared to the wealth of experience and the analyses that tend to be confined to informal discussions and individual reflections. We still know too little about the range of programs and experiments being attempted, and the related problems that keep us arguing late into the night.

We don't want to end with an apology about what's missing. This issue represents an important step in deepening the discussion about women's empowerment, gender and literacy. One central conclusion needs to be highlighted from the contributions in this issue and the discussions that have surrounded it: the feminist critique of literacy, and the development of appropriate strategies and practice, must be based very directly on women's understanding and experience of illiteracy/literacy within their daily lives, as well as within the broader structures of oppression that govern their lives.

But the questions remain: What is the relation between women's empowerment and literacy? What are the implications of a gender perspective in literacy? Let's continue to share and learn from our different contexts, approaches, and politics. What is your experience? What problems are you coming up against? What makes you mad? What small or large successes can you share? What questions do you want discussed and debated through the network?

Thank you to Susan Turner who coordinated and edited the material for this issue, and also, to the activists from the Toronto literacy community who met with us twice early on in the process to help provide a framework and ideas for content.



The Women's Program

You might be interested to know that:

◆ Several women from our network attended the first ICAE three-week international leadership workshop in international adult education which took place in Santiago, Chile, September 1989. In fact there was, quite surprisingly to all, a majority of women. The workshop was coordinated by Teresa Marshall, coordinator of the ICAE Health and Popular Education network and Lynda Yanz from the Women's Program.

◆ In late October, the Women's Program held its first Advisory Committee Meeting in Toronto to discuss program priorities and recommendations from the first draft of an organizational review. Twenty key contacts from regional networks and working committees attended. Two important outcomes were: a draft Statement of Mission which we will be circulating for improvement and endorsement over the next months, and a plan of work for an important new program initiative, an "international gender and popular education research project." (See insert).

◆ On November 3 we hosted "Up In Alms, Women's Organizations Worldwide Confront the Funding Crisis," a public forum to stimulate discussion and debate on the current trends and policies of international development agencies, and their implications for women's organizing, at national, regional and international levels. See the next *Voices Rising*, for excerpts from presentations. Send us your insights and questions so that we can catalyze a broader debate and more effective strategizing on how to front the pressures on women's organizing internationally.

Two special initiatives in 1990:

◆ In February 14 women from our network (from the West Bank, Egypt, India, Thailand, Mexico, Peru, Quebec, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mali, Canada and Zimbabwe) will take part in a two-week exchange visit to literacy and health programs in Tanzania and Mali. The project is being co-sponsored with the Women's Network of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (AALAE).

◆ In May, the Women's Program, working with the Center for Women's Resources in the Philippines, will sponsor an Asia regional 2-week training program for representatives of groups engaged in educational/organizing work with women. The aim is to share the effective and empowering methods and strategies that women have developed.

Staff changes in the Women's Program Toronto office

Jane Gurr, who has been working with us for the past three years, has decided to move to Ottawa. She'll continue to coordinate the Africa exchange visit. Sigrid Blohm, who has been doing all the Women's Program design and layout for over two years now, will be leaving us for an eight month trip which will take her to Nicaragua, the Soviet Union and Asia.

Dena Hamid has joined us as receptionist and bookkeeper. Dena's roots are in Trinidad; she's recently moved to Toronto from England; and is currently working with a schooling project in the South Sudan and as a community radio journalist for a weekly program called "Third Wave".

That leaves Lynda, Shannonbrooke and Dena "womanning" the office, since current financial realities make it impossible to think about quickly replacing those we're losing. Ruth Lara, Linzi Manicom, Katebi Kidd, Anibal Viton and David Smith continue to help us out on part-time and volunteer bases.

LITERACY - A Tool for Empowerment of Women?

From her paper presented at the Symposium on Women and Literacy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Stockholm, June 1989.

Literacy is one of the first steps in a process of enabling women to take control over their own lives, participate on a more equal basis in society, and eventually free themselves from economic exploitation and patriarchal oppression. In addition to social justice, human rights and equality, there are many other human, social and economic reasons to urge governments and organizations to take special actions to make literacy education for women and girls a priority objective during International Literacy Year and afterwards.

Gender Disparities

Sixty three percent of the world's approximately one billion illiterate people is female; the official estimate is 561 million women (UNESCO 1988). And the proportion of women illiterates is steadily growing. In absolute numbers the greatest increase in women's illiteracy was in Asia: 109 million between 1960 and 1985. In those same years the number of illiterate women in Africa rose by 44 percent, from 68 to 98 million; the increase among males was much smaller. In Latin America the increase and difference between women and men is negligible. The statistics highlight the de facto discrimination against women in education. Various forms of patriarchal and economic oppression subordinate women according to the history and culture of each country and region. Influences from pre-colonial traditions, as well as colonial and post-colonial imperialist conditions all account for the specific situation of poor illiterate women today.

Lack of access to school accounts for most adult illiteracy. The traditional sex division of roles in the family and in the society exclude most girls from learning literacy through schooling. When girls enrol in schools, education often reinforces their subordination. Even if the open discrimination practiced during colonial days is less common today, patriarchal ideologies and social systems that discriminate against women have persisted. Many researchers have shown how education systems reproduce not only the social class power structure, but also the existing gender differences. A truly equal access to formal schooling is still a right that must be pursued, and literacy for women needs systematic critical research.

Women's Response to Literacy Activities in Different Contexts

Between 70 and 90 percent of enrolled literacy learners in many African countries are women. But women's dropout rate is high and their attendance irregular. Studies show that it takes longer for women than for men to become "functionally literate". Women's motivation for literacy is partly linked to changes in the social roles of men and women. Women in many Third World countries are now active in areas that men previously monopolized. With the migration of men to towns to take up employment, women have been left in charge. Women in this situation see literacy as an instrument for coping with their increased responsibilities. Women also want to be able to read their husbands' letters and to write back without the help of others.

In South Asia women participate less than men in literacy. The hindrances of poverty, religious and cultural traditions, and the social and political milieu, impose a strict enforcement of the economic and social subjugation of women. Without there being accompanying social change, literacy does not present a way out of the existing subordination of women. Women are certainly aware that the common constraints on their participation in literacy - lack of time, overwork, male resistance - are not easily overcome. Successful cases such as the Self-Employed Women's Association in India show that only when literacy is linked to making women aware of the causes of their oppression, and at the same time to organizing and training them for self-reliance activities, does it become a strongly felt and acted upon economic need.

But everywhere the multiple traditional and new roles of women prevent them from regular attendance and efficient learning. Women are overburdened with domestic tasks, cooking and cleaning, childrearing, cultivating and subsistence and income-earning activities. Just the fact of giving birth frequently leaves little time and energy for additional projects like literacy. It means frequent interruptions to attend to

by Agneta Lind, SIDA, Educational Division

children who are at home and when mothers bring their smallest children to literacy classes, their concentration on learning is weakened.

Women lack self-confidence and are relatively isolated from literate environments. Women learners often express their weak confidence in learning by blaming themselves for their learning difficulties, saying, for example, "my head is no good for learning" or "I like to study but nothing stays in my head." While more common among women, this attitude inculcated by colonialism is also widespread among male learners. However, many men benefit from having more contact outside of the rural home environment than women. Women, on the other hand, have little exposure to public communication and to other languages than their mother tongue. Many more men than women communicate in the official language due to patriarchal traditions of men being the "spokesmen" and women expected to stay silent in public, the mobility of men as compared to women's homebound isolation, and the fact that men more often than women have been to primary school for some time during their childhood. Even if women are strongly motivated to learn the official national language, learning literacy and a second language at the same time considerably complicates the process of literacy acquisition. Furthermore, the use of new literacy skills and hence literacy retention is severely limited by the lack of access to easy reading and writing materials. Almost all printed communication for public use in official languages is too complex in structure, vocabulary and presentation for a newly literate person. This is very discouraging to self-confidence and further efforts to learn.

Moreover, women are discouraged by the attitudes of men, often including the male teacher, towards their capacities in the classroom. Husbands and guardians often forbid women to take part in literacy classes. Men are afraid of the challenge to their power position within the family. Such challenges can lead men to violent reactions against women. Fear of husbands' or other males' violent reactions against women's independent activities, such as literacy, prevents women from participating in literacy and/or further training. This is a very important issue which needs more attention.

Teaching methods and attitudes play an essential role in literacy participation and sustaining participation among women in particular. The role of female teachers for female learners and the question whether separate female learning groups encourage learning and participation among women are important issues.

The Role of Political Mobilization and Community Support

Although the need to explain the relevance of literacy in pre-literacy mobilization campaigns is essential, it is more important to create a situation where the need for literacy is felt or where the use of literacy becomes evident, or to select areas for literacy where such a situation already exists in order to ensure sustained motivation and participation. The insertion of literacy activities into a process of social and political reform or other development-related efforts aiming at solving felt needs, encourages participation and motivation. In Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, literacy was part of a national policy for overcoming poverty and injustice. Both the state and the citizens expected literacy to be one of many factors which would improve social, political and economic conditions and help develop human and material resources. "National commitment" or "political will" expressed through the state and/or popular movement, incorporating all sectors of the society, and the capacity to organize and mobilize the people and other resources for literacy, were crucial for high levels of participation of women and men. In such campaigns the teaching methods were traditional but the contents have been focussed on national issues, including equal rights and women's emancipation and equal participation in all spheres of society. But just as in other literacy strategies, the sustaining of literacy among women in particular proves difficult. In the post-campaign situation, just like in other contexts, women tend to be pushed out at a gradually increasing rate along the path through the process of literacy and post-literacy.

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Literacy Linked to other "Development" Activities

Many literacy programs today are based on the concept of "fundamental education" that was promoted by UNESCO and other agencies from 1946-1964, and adopted to describe a broad field of development activities, including non-formal literacy programs. This concept became merged with the "community development" ideology that stressed that literacy must be used for some "practical" activity in order to produce development. More selective and economic-oriented literacy programs draw on the work-oriented "functional" approach, tried out by UNESCO in eleven countries from 1967 to 1972 to find ways of transforming literacy into an effective instrument for economic development.

The meaning of "functionality" was limited to improved vocational skills of a target group, mostly employed workers, in a specific economic activity. In many cases literacy was "functionalized" in terms of industry, mechanized agriculture, or skilled crafts, virtually excluding any female participation. Modern sector development in the Third World is heavily weighted towards men, and literacy, integrated into development programs, was also geared to men.

A more common approach today is government-promoted "general literacy" programs with fairly diverse objectives. They are often large-scale, "politically cool" programs that provide access to those who want literacy, and where illiteracy is not seen as an immediate, major obstacle to the economy. Women are often an important target group. The curriculum is usually oriented to subjects that the state is comfortable with – healthcare, nutrition and agriculture.

Studies of traditional "income generating" programs find that they are often not generating much income and that literacy is seldom made a priority. In many state-run, as well as NGO-sponsored programs, the philosophy is that literacy is not an aim in itself, and so literacy should be integrated into other meaningful activities. Literacy and numeracy become necessary tools for learning more, controlling money and participating in community activities. However, in this approach literacy instruction often becomes neglected, since the participating women are expected to be involved in so many activities at the same time. Women organized in many integrated projects neither manage to generate income nor to learn literacy skills.

Priorites have to be defined according to each context. BRAC in Bangladesh, as well as many women's organizations in India, has concluded that literacy is not a priority. It has been discovered there that women find literacy instruction meaningful only when projects that actually improve women's conditions have been going on successfully for some years and have raised awareness of the accompanying need for literacy. In other cases, for example in Latin America, women have been mobilised and recruited for the purpose of literacy but the lessons in practice have concentrated more on awareness and/or knowledge transfer about social and political conditions and agendas; the participants have felt deceived because they expected to learn to read, write and calculate.

Women's Literacy Motivation

Women literacy learners' responses to questions about motivation include the desire to help children to study; more self-reliance and control over personal life; liberation from isolation and absolute submission to received authority; and the wish to be actors in society in the same way as men. Several experiences, particularly in the context of social transformation and political mobilization for literacy and equality between women and men, show the importance for women of coming together to discuss common problems through literacy participation.

"Before we could hardly go out. As a young girl I was restricted to my home during several years. As married I had to wear my veil when I went out and that was not often. Now we have been let free. I am starting to get friends."

"We are learning to read and write. It is fine. But we also get together and talk. That is still better."

Concluding Comments

Social and political contexts determine how and when literacy programs are relevant for women. Illiterate women often want to become literate, but relatively few manage to satisfy this wish because the constraints are overwhelming. Projects involving women probably have a better chance to function well if they include a number of women with enough education to be able to cope with training in leadership, organization, management, planning, bookkeeping and marketing. Illiterate women ought to have a choice of either participating fully in proj-

ect activities or in literacy classes until they have attained literacy and numeracy skills. A rotation scheme would help overcome the problems of not generating income, literacy or any other tangible results. And a process of conscientization, like that in the popular education approach, is also crucial.

Special provisions and program designs are required, such as childcare during class time and intensive periods of instruction. The Burkina Faso Ministry of Rural Affairs, in an innovative approach, recruited over 13,000 women officials and members of women's groups, cooperatives, executive boards of female revolutionary committees as well as village midwives, to teach literacy in ten national languages in 470 centres. Literacy instruction took place at boarding centres during four phases of twelve days each, with weekly breaks during which participants could return home to their families. The campaign was successful in spite of problems created by possessive husbands, negative influences exerted by adversaries of female emancipation, as well as the exhausting demands of being a wife and mother. More than 40 percent of the learners were nursing mothers, so women had to bring others to look after the children brought to the centres. Food rations were often insufficient, but the level of learning was considered excellent.

In spite of well-justified warnings that traditional welfare approaches of basic non-formal education for women reproduce women's subordination rather than empowering or emancipating them, the importance of teaching women survival skills related to literacy as well as health and nutrition, must not be underestimated. Such training provides necessary tools for further empowering activities of awareness-raising and participation, as well as for struggles for equality and social justice.

Literacy is a necessary tool in this process, even if it does not solve fundamental development problems. We must pay great attention to women's particular needs and constraints in research and action. We must promote action research combined with the training of researchers, trainers, and instructors so that we might better understand female learners' specific situations.

Recently literate women on the south coast of Kenya explained the advantages of having learnt to read, write and calculate by referring to their new abilities to sign their names, to travel, control money transactions, read medical prescriptions and instructions, and their resulting feeling of pride and self-reliance. "Our eyes have been opened." *(Learners' Panel, International Task Force on Literacy meeting, April 1989)*

"With literacy, people don't earn more but everything they know is in their heads. They can go anywhere, do anything, ask things, enter in. When people don't know reading and writing, they are afraid." *(Interview with Cristina Mavale, factory worker in Maputo, in Marshall 1988)*

PHOTO MARGARET RANDALL

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KHULUMANI MAKHOSIKAZI

WOMEN AND LITERACY

.....some South African women speak

In November 1988 COCAW (Congress of South African Writers) held a two-day conference on Women and Writing. They invited progressive literacy organizations to talk on the topic of Women and Literacy. To prepare for the conference, the English Literacy Project (ELP) ran a series of workshops with a group of women learners to explore the relationship of literacy and gender. We came to the understanding that what affects literacy learning has a lot more to do with racial and economic factors than gender factors.

What follows is a discussion of these workshops. But before we launch into this discussion we would like to describe ELP's work within a context of the extent of illiteracy in South Africa.

Literacy in South Africa

Nine million South Africans are illiterate. That is 9 million people over the age of 20 have had less than five years of formal schooling. The racial proportion of this number is significant.

- 47% of africans
- 27% of coloured
- 15% of asians and
- 2% of whites are classified as illiterate.

The racial disparity in these figures is predictable. They clearly reflect the priorities of an apartheid education system which promotes white education and neglects black education.

Only 1% of all illiterate people are in literacy programs. Most of these are run by the state. However, there are some progressive literacy projects in the country whose literacy work is part of the struggle against apartheid.

The English Literacy Project

ELP offers a service to adults who have missed out on basic education. We work with trade unions to organize literacy classes at various workplaces. We produce basic English readers, workbooks and a newspaper for adults. We believe that literacy must work towards the empowerment of workers, so that they are informed and active in the democratic movement.

Since we do our work in a context of active feedback and interchange between ELP and learners and since our learners are mostly unionized workers, they have had a deeply politicising effect on our materials.

When ELP started off in 1983 our focus was on teaching English, reading and writing. We produced ESL workbooks and teacher training in South African images and content, but based on the British model of functional, skill-based English language learning. In 1986 we initiated a learners' committee with reps from each class.

It soon emerged that learners wanted more than English. They asked for general education, including current affairs, political topics and numeracy. So we started writing articles which provided people with information to discuss a variety of social and political issues of concern to them. Classes spent hours reading about and discussing the new Labour Law, wage increases, skin lightening creams, the history of the struggle, the state of emergency--the topics are endless. Discussions happen in people's own language or in broken English--the learning of English and literacy has been incorporated into understanding and challenging the changes that are happening in our society.

Exploring Literacy and Gender

Over the years, ELP staff often said it would be important to talk about women's issues in our classes. Occasionally a discussion on men/women relations would erupt in a class, but we never had the focus or energy to take it further. So we took it as a stimulus to action when COSAW invited ELP to present a paper on women and literacy.

ELP chose to workshop a play with a group of women learners who would perform at the conference. We did not want to "speak" on behalf of our learners. We thought that the learners in performance would "voice" the issues around their experience as women attending literacy classes.

We invited all ELP women learners to a Saturday workshop. Most of the women who came were from one workplace--a chicken factory where they are employed as unskilled labourers. At the end of the first workshop there had been a lot of discussion but no play and the group agreed to meet again to prepare the presentation for COSAW.

Attendance at the workshops fluctuated, generally decreasing. We remained optimistic that we could pull off a play. Yet at the final workshop, when the learners were to transform talking into performance, the ELP staff outnumbered the learners. So we changed plans and presented a paper to the conference on what we had learned from the women learners.

Workshopped by ELP Learners and Staff

Written by Dawn Norton and Carola Steinberg

What follows is a description of the process ELP staff and learners went through to explore the theme of women and literacy and our analysis of the outcomes of the workshops.

KHULUMANI MAKHOSIKAZI

The first part of the workshop dealt with women's attitudes to themselves and to men. As an icebreaker we discussed whether, if we had a choice, we would choose to be men or women?

Two thirds of the women "chose" to be women. They saw themselves as strong and competent and responsible, particularly in the role of mother and breadwinner.

A third of the women said no, actually, they'd rather be men. They said that men care only for themselves, keep their pay packets to themselves and drink at the shebeen. The women wanted the irresponsibility that men can indulge in.

Later the learners agreed that although women work more than men and shoulder more responsibility, generally in this society, men had more power.

The next step in the workshop was to look at the factors which affect literacy learning.

The women had a variety of reasons for attending classes. There were functional goals: learn to help children with homework, read directions to get to meetings, operate bank machines, fill-in forms. There were personal goals: do things for myself, speak to managers at work and speak up for myself. There was economic necessity: educated people can get better jobs and better wages. And there were overall political aims: we want to understand things better.

The women's motivation to learn was very strong. When asked what helped them in their learning, they responded:

- We are determined.
- We want to overcome our oppression.
- There will be less chance to be intimidated.
- We want to learn things that only men used to learn.

And they all agreed with one learner who said:

In the past a woman got married and she had few worries because her husband looked after her and her children. But today, things are different. Today, women have to look after their children and after their husbands. And to do that, women need a good job in order to make money. And therefore women need a good education.

The Obstacles

But the obstacles they needed to overcome in their search for knowledge were formidable. We categorised these obstacles into three main factors:

First, *political and economic*. Some of the statements that the women made were:

- The government oppresses us blacks because they need people to do the dirty work.
- The government and management are not interested in education for adults like us.
- The government does not build enough schools for black school children.
- I worry in class because we have no money.
- I must do overtime work.

So the learners put blame (and quite rightly so) on the governments deliberate strategy of educational under-provision for black adults and children.

Second, *organizational and personal*. Women mentioned:

- There is no time off from work to attend classes.
- There's no transport after class.
- I miss classes because of many funerals.
- Other workers laugh at me when I go to class.
- My children laugh at me because I am too old to learn.
- The lessons are not interesting for me.
- Learning is difficult because I don't have enough education.

The learners agreed that all these factors affected both men and women. However they argued that attending classes was more difficult for women than men.

Then third, *gender factors*. Here the women made three main points:

- Too much work to do at home--too much cooking, cleaning, looking after children and doing everything.
- Husbands who get cross when supper is late, or are jealous and don't want their wives to attend literacy classes if they themselves are illiterate, or who think that their wives are seeing other men instead of attending class.
- Falling pregnant and looking after small children.

We looked at the problems specifically affecting women, and discussed ways of dealing with them. It was these very problems and possible solutions that we had wanted to develop into drama. But this line of thinking didn't get us very far. The women demanded work-time off for learning. But other than that, they spoke about doing more housework on the weekends or cooking the day before so that they had time for classes. Not once did any learner suggest that their husbands help around the house or cook or look after sick children. Ironically, the "solutions" presented by

the women required them doing even more work.

What did we at ELP learn?

We learned that learners are far more conscientised around issues of race and class than around gender.

The sorts of things that women talked about in relation to their learning had more to do with living in South Africa, than about being women per se. Racial discrimination and poverty are more immediate daily experiences of injustice than sexual inequalities.

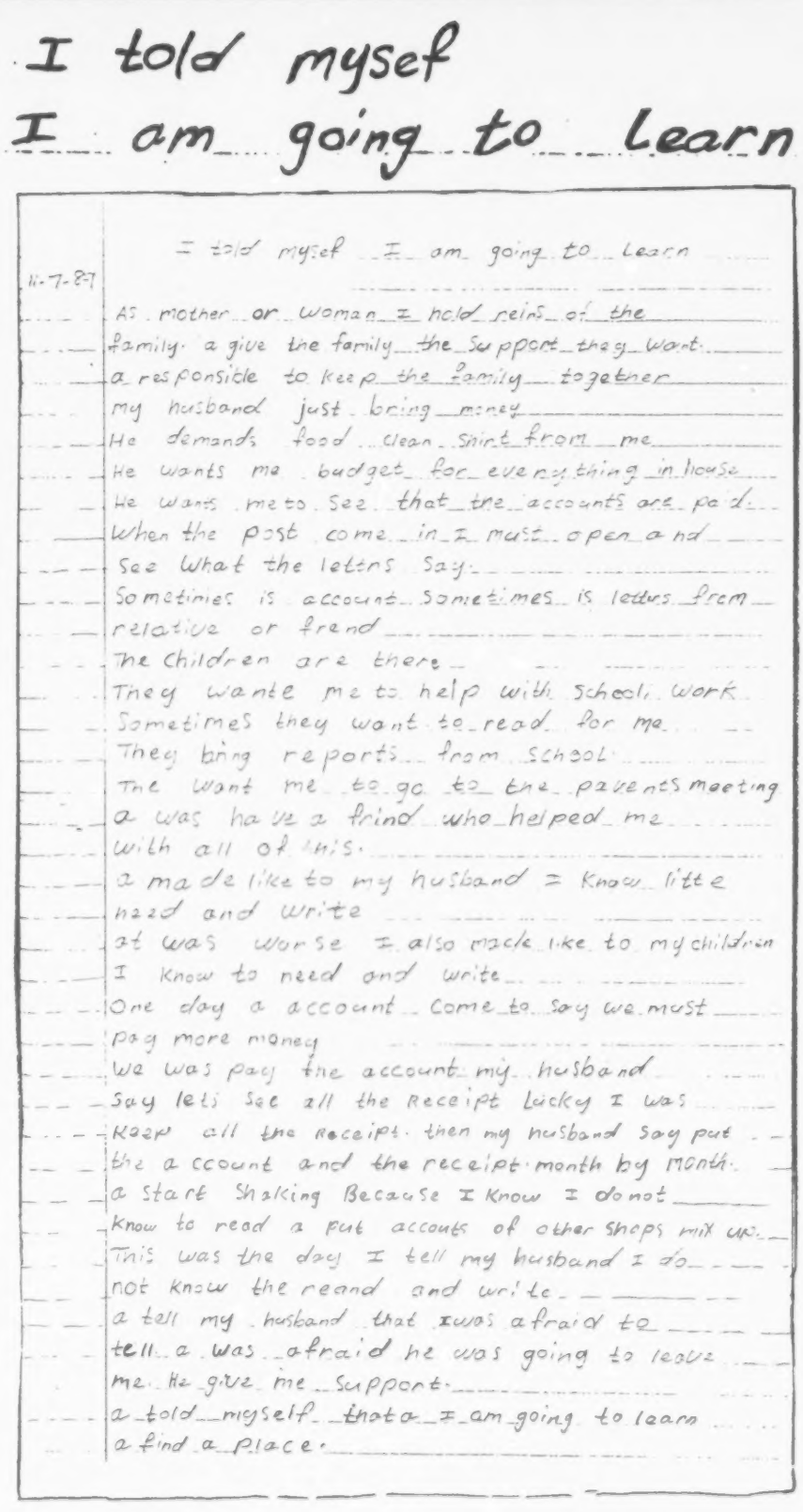
We learned that gender roles are clearly defined and unchallenged.

The issue which affected only women and not men was domestic work. This restricted their time commitments to literacy classes. The women's "solution" to make time to attend the classes, ironically meant extra work in the home. They did not consider including men in domestic work. Gender roles were perceived to be a "given" and part of the "natural order" of things. Thus domestic burdens and the double load that women endure--of work at the work place and work at home--go unchallenged.

We learned that our entry point into gender issues should have been around immediate, concrete concerns.

These could be issues that have already been mentioned in classes: lobola payments, contraception, child care or sexual harassment. Through discussion around these issues, learners could overcome the traditional problem of women seeing their experience as purely personal and from there develop an analysis of gender and the different power relations between men and women. Then maybe women would feel they had a right to challenge men's lack of domestic assistance or men's attitudes to their attending class.

"Women and Learning" was too abstract. It was a typical case of us imposing an issue rather than responding to what organically arises from the classes. The question now for us is whether initiating discussion around gender in order to develop a feminist analysis of learner's lives when the issues haven't emerged from the learners themselves is a leftist form of political propaganda or cultural imposition?



I told myself
I am going to learn

11-7-87

I told myself I am going to Learn

As mother or woman I hold reins of the family. a give the family the support they want.
a responsible to keep the family together
my husband just bring money
He demands food clean shirt from me
He wants me budget for everything in house
He wants me to see that the accounts are paid.
When the post come in I must open and
See what the letters say.
Sometimes is account Sometimes is letter from
relative or frend
The children are there
They wante me to help with school work
Sometimes they want to read for me
They bring reports from school
The want me to go to the parents meeting
a was have a frind who helped me
with all of this.
a made like to my husband I know litte
need and write
at was worse I also made like to my children
I know to need and write
One day a account come to say we must
pay more money
we was pay the account my husband
Say let's see all the Receipt Lucky I was
Keep all the Receipt. then my husband say put
the account and the receipt month by month.
a start Shaking Because I know I do not
know to read a put accounts of other shops mix up.
This was the day I tell my husband I do
not know the reand and write
a tell my husband that I was afraid to
tell a was afraid he was going to leave
me. He give me support.
a told myself that a I am going to learn
a find a place.

But now my husband start complain.
He complain that the days I go to my class.
I come late the food is not ready in time.
a keep silent and say myself.
a am not going to give him chance.
I have frustrate myself long.
By giving away I know to read and write.
One day we attend the meeting for
my learn a come home lat ther was
no food He fight me for the food.
I say why not coock yourself
you have hands. He kick me.
next time. I come late again.
This time was from class.
a was afraid I was shaking.
He Sa to me I am goinging to
stop this bisness of learning.
He take my books and throw
them I away out of the door.
a go out and pick them and say
yo do this again. a pack my clothes.
and go away. you coock and wash.
for the Children He look at me.
He keep silent and go to the bedroom.
And I know I have win.
Elizabeth ndaba.

In Conclusion

The workshops confirmed for us that women's issues are tangential to literacy classes. People come to literacy for functional, coping skills as well as for political information. Certainly women's issues come into that, but they are unlikely to be central.

ELP also realized that we don't yet have clarity on how to focus discussion of women's issues in literacy classes. Yes, there is FEDTRAW (Federation of South African Women) and there are strong women's voices in COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). What ELP needs to do is take the discussions that are happening in those organizations and link with the needs of literacy learners. Only then can we create materials at a basic English level that would provide information and a starting point for women's issues.

We are part of a society that is caught up in national and economic liberation as the highest priorities. Women's issues will only become important in literacy classes once they have become important in the national arena of political organizations and unions.

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TOMORROW WILL BE DIFFERENT: A Literacy Course for Women

An experience from Santiago, Chile

***Tomorrow Will Be Different* is a gift for Spanish-speaking women, who struggle endlessly all over the world to raise the level of women's literacy. It is a manual for women's empowerment by women and as such it is one more force for the women's global movement, that wants urgently to rebuild this planet before it is destroyed by the patriarchs.**

This is a work that broadens horizons and shatters the barriers to women's literacy and education, questioning, analyzing and reflecting on the society, from a women's perspective. It offers alternative ways, which can be created by women to improve their lives and transform a future for all the people, at the same time that they learn to read and write. Its precise methodology and clear instructions makes this book an invaluable tool for women popular educators.

In the International Literacy Year, this book gives us a seed to grow in the field of alternative education and of women's literacy by women.
(from the Prologue, by Carolyn Lehman)

This manual is the product of a growing understanding of the meaning of being a woman in a patriarchal world. We have lived for years near the women in the marginalized areas of Santiago; their life has taught us, even more clearly, the nature of domination and the true courage to confront it. With them, we have felt the effects of marginalization; with them we have experienced the helplessness and fear in the face of institutionalized violence; we have cried with them when they told us of their horror of being raped or battered, and we have struggled with them to be treated with dignity.

excerpted from a book by Peggy Moran and Monica Hingston

In a society that allows and promotes such oppression of women, the illiterate women is the one who is more oppressed. For that reason we decided to develop this literacy program, which contains a consciousness raising process that will help women to reflect on their reality, to develop a critical conscience and to take a more active role in the transformation of society.

The motivation to make this literacy course originated in 1986 when some women participating in Casa Sofía's (a centre for *pobladoras* – women in the marginalized areas) groups did not know to read and write. They told us how embarrassed and isolated they felt because they could not fully participate in the groups and other activities. It was a particular oppression, among other oppressions. They asked us to teach them.

We wanted to respond to their request but not with just any literacy program, but with one made from a women's perspective. We found one partially developed by two Chilean women. Based on what they had done we developed a methodology.

In August 1986, eleven women began the program, their courage moved us as did their persistence, desire and efforts. Their stories are similar to those of many, many oppressed and marginalized women, living in a country tormented by 14 years of military dictatorship, where the effects of unemployment, hunger, illness, persecution, threats and deaths doubly affect women living in poverty.

They came embarrassed for not being able to read at their age and with the fear of maybe not being able to learn. They were between 26 and 56 years of age. No one had more than three years of school; many had never used a pencil. Some had been victims of abuse in their childhood; one of them was deaf as a result of a beating suffered from her partner, another one lived with her alcoholic step-father, others had been humiliated by their teachers and some had been pulled out of school, or simply never went to school in order to care for their younger siblings or work. All these contributed to a great sense of insecurity, as well as the daily concerns for surviving, the difficulties of being able to study at home, the situation in the country, which were obstacles difficult to overcome.

In spite of so many barriers, they grew as women, they acquired new perspectives and they advanced in their ability to read and write. There was a rich exchange that boosted the development of a critical consciousness. The generative words in the methodology were taken from the reality and experience of the Chilean women.

We lived exceptional moments. There were disappointments and successes, cries and laughs. We did relaxation exercises to reduce stress. We shared personal stories and we grew in our love, appreciation and friendship to each other. One very cold morning a woman arrived with bread she had cooked herself, and without saying anything, she cut it and gave us each a piece. Bread and roses ...

Nine of the eleven women completed the four months receiving a certificate in a ceremony. Three of them kept meeting during 1987, once a week to work on reading units.

After evaluating the pilot program used in 1986, we saw the need of promoting literacy amongst more *pobladoras* and of multiplying groups and locations. In 1987 we decided to create a new program. The methodology is based on Paulo Freire's and it is detailed enough to allow its use by women willing to work in the literacy field.

We have chosen to create the program for women and from their perspective because women are, amongst the poor and oppressed, the most abandoned, oppressed and isolated. We hope that, if this work multiplies, for many women and for the whole world, tomorrow will be different.
(from the Introduction)

The manual details 17 lessons around themes and generatives words. Tomorrow will be Different *is available by writing Monica Hingston, Correo Central Casilla 52414, Santiago Chile.*

KEEPING THE CIRCLE STRONG

Native Women's Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada

NWRC CANADA

Over the last few years Native women in Canada have increased their organizing strength and visibility in both the Native and women's movement. They've fought as part of these movements as well as confronted the discrimination and silencing they continue to face within them. Women in cities and Native communities in every province across the country have worked to support struggles for self-determination, they have been at the forefront of battles for improved housing and health care, to stop "kidnapping" by state officials of Native children from their home communities and against continuing police harassment. Native women have taken difficult stands against violence, even where this might threaten to "divide"; they have also challenged the women's movement to address its racism and exclusion of Native women.

The Native Women's Resource Centre is unique, the only one of its kind in Canada geared to the special needs and concerns of Native Women in Toronto. Lynda Yanz talked with two workers from the literacy program about the Centre.

Carrie Tabobondung: I come from a reserve called Parry Island, and after I finished high school I went to the University of Regina to the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College to start my Indian social work degree. After a year, I went back to the reserve and then came here to look for a job. When I first started the job I didn't really know much about literacy. I knew the problem was there, but I didn't know what to do. I've gradually found out, but am still learning a lot.

Donna Marshall: I worked at the Department of Indian Affairs, so needless to say I soon needed a different job. It was really hard at first. Carrie had just started too. But once you get going, and keep your ears open you start to grasp. Then when I started reading the stuff it was like, no kidding, as if we didn't know this before.

***Lynda Yanz**: What do you do here at the Centre?*

Carrie: The Native Women's Resource Centre provides short term, emergency services as well as longer term support. Services include assistance with welfare, housing, employment, literacy, referral, job search, day care, food, clothing, household items and support of women who are being abused. Many of the women who use the Centre are in transition, either from reserve to city or from city to city. We also organize other activities such as the women's circle which is a monthly support group and weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. The family worker provides one-to-one counselling.

Donna: Housing is a big problem in Toronto. And when you look at where we live within the city, it's mostly in areas where there are low rental housing projects. Native people move around a lot and housing's always a problem, made worse by the high cost of living in Toronto. So at the Centre we try to help. We also have a food bank. We give out food when people come by, to help tide them over and loan out bus tokens so people can get around.

Those are the people our literacy program wants to reach. A lot of our learners last year came from Pedoban Lodge, a Native alcohol treatment centre. So many of our learners were from there we ended up getting involved in a lot of different activities and issues.

PHOTO Liza McCoy

***Lynda**: Why a Native* women's *resource centre?*

Donna: A lot of the Native organizations focus on "families" which includes women naturally, but what happens is that they are organized by men. You have lots of situations where there are no women on the boards. How can they address a woman's needs without any women? That's part of the problem. The other really obvious problem is the society we live in: it's a white middle-class society. Native women come from a different history and culture and the result is that we really get the short end of the stick. Not only do we have to deal with sexist discrimination but also racism. Being a Native woman myself I've felt . . . I've come to a lot of dead ends in my life. So why a Native women's resource centre? Maybe because it's important just to be letting Native women know that they're not the only ones out there. They're not the only ones. There is a collective of women they can count on, and through that more and more Native women's issues are being voiced.

The NWRC is based on our belief in the traditional teachings of the Elders. We believe these teachings are essential to the continued survival of Indigenous people.

We also believe in the ability of Native Women to Initiate, Manage and Provide our own service.

We now believe all Native Women have unique qualities and knowledge to share with others based on individual experiences.

Carrie: The Centre got started by a group of Native women who got together to discuss their concerns about the quality and use of services already being provided in Toronto. The problem was that there was nothing specifically for Native women. The Centre opened months later in October 1985.

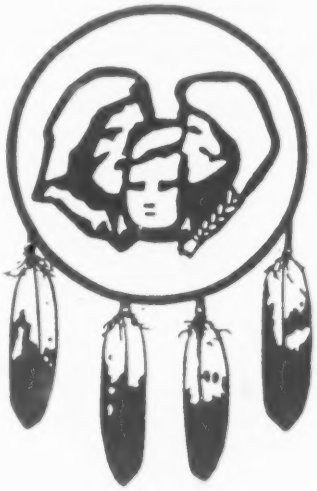
Donna: Now there's a lot more women using the Centre and our program is getting better known which means there's more demand. But we continue to have a problem with money and staff. We have no core funding. When you have such a high turnover of staff it creates stress for the rest of the staff who are left, and probably most for the administrator. There is such a high turnover of staff and board. To me that's really tragic. There's no foundation.

Carrie: I think a lot of the turnover is because of the different government programs we're forced to hire people on.

Donna: It's oppressive to have someone working under those programs and know that she's not going to be working for that long, that the program's going to end and she's going to go right back to where she was. We have two workers on a provincial government program. What happens to them when the time's up? Where do we get money to keep them on?

***Lynda**: What about the Literacy Program?*

Carrie: The program started in 1987 because the Board saw literacy as an educational tool for Native women. Education is one specific need that we found was apparent in the Native community. Many people may already know how to read and write but it's important to extend those skills, and build self-esteem.



NWRC CANADA

Donna: This past year we've had about 35 learners. Some of them have finished, have reached their goals; others haven't. I wouldn't say it was half and half, maybe a quarter didn't reach the goals that they set out.

Carrie: The program is learner centered, based on the learner's needs and interests. A learner coming into the program is matched with a volunteer tutor. We coordinate their first meeting and make sure everything is going smooth in the match. Tutors report back monthly to the coordinator on how things are going. Sometimes it doesn't work, so we try to get another tutor for the learner. It happens sometimes; everything's not perfect.

***Lynda**: What training do tutors get?*

Carrie: We haven't done much training in this last year because we still had enough trained tutors. We're planning to have a training session for all the tutors. It will cover the basics of assessing learners, tips on how to teach, ideas about activities. And we teach them about the learners--what to expect, like low self-esteem and how they might feel about themselves. We also talk about the Native culture, how important it is. We want them to understand that the way Native people learn is different from non-Natives.

At this point a lot of our tutors are non-Native, so in the tutor training we talk about Native culture, and the education system--how it started and how Native people got involved, how they were forced into the residential system and the effect that has had on us. [Native children were systematically separated from their families and home communities to attend federal government residential schools often thousands of miles away from home.] We stress that tutors need to be able to understand where we're coming from.

Donna: We try to broaden their horizon and make the tutors aware of the way we feel. It's like we're the start of a clean-up generation. It's really hard. We're not going to accomplish all that we want our literacy program to do, but we're hoping to start something. We're talking generations of work here, because there have been generations of a plight that has been oppressing our people.

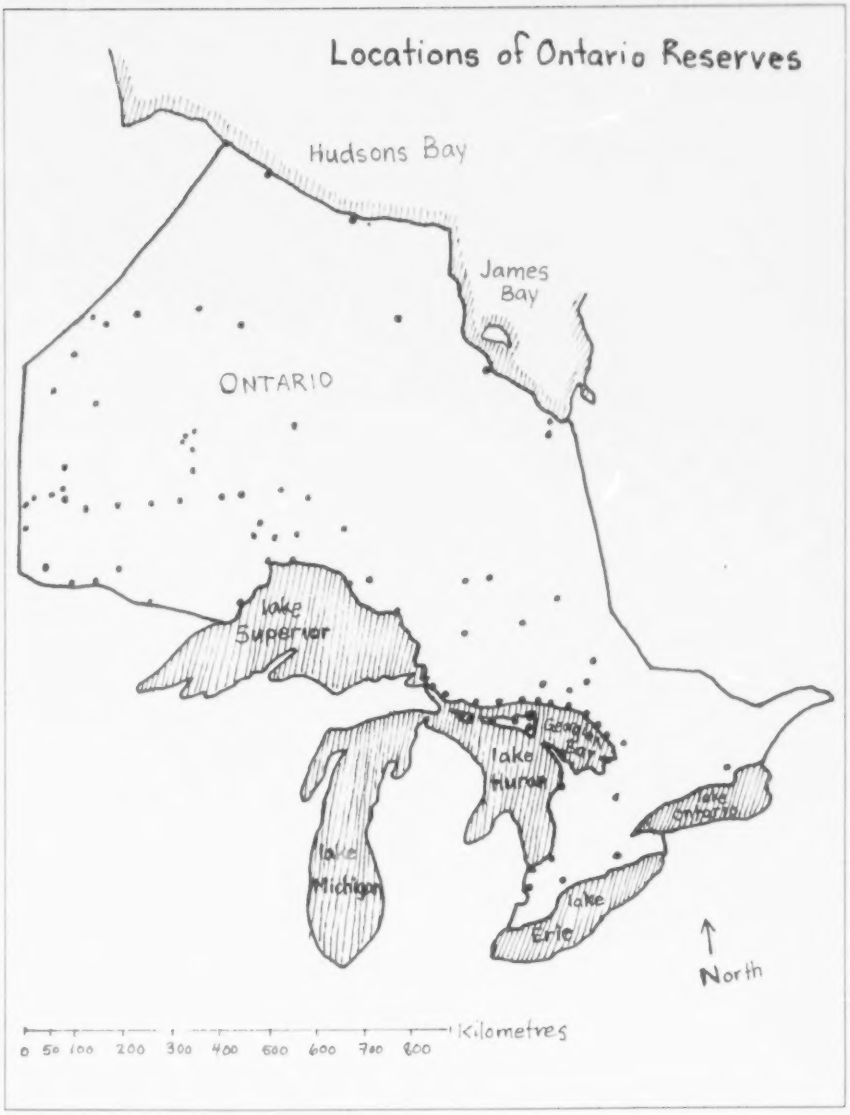
Plus you're dealing with a lot of angry and frustrated people. And that hinders their learning capabilities. Sometimes they're not willing to keep going. You've got to look at it from a holistic point of view. We're not just looking at the difference between the way Native and white children are educated. We're about changing the education system altogether, changing the whole approach to learning and teaching. And we think everyone has a lot to learn from what we're doing.

In the education system you are taught do's and don'ts and shoulds. You don't experience things, you're taught based on somebody else's opinion. So it can be that opinion is forced on you, and it can become confusing as you go from teacher to teacher, from grade to grade. In the older days Native people basically taught their children through experience and they wouldn't have to ask "why", you wouldn't have to explain "because". Instead you learn about how it is in the experience.

For example, when I was younger I had problems with reading. Now I'm a good reader but I didn't get good marks and I couldn't understand that. I think that was due to my shyness, and it showed when I had to read aloud in class, which is how your reading marks are set. So I got penalized. That's not really fair.

Carrie: The business of having report cards and being evaluated by white people . . . that's how Native people start to feel inferior to the teachers, like they're not on the same level, the teachers are up there and you're down here. We were never taught that way to begin with; we were always taught by living and seeing rather than memorizing.

Donna: We feel like we've been robbed by the education system. Besides how we're treated there is the fact that you don't learn about Native people. And in history all you learn is the textbook "Indian." We massacred; they conquered. I hated going to my history classes. I still don't have any use for history that is not written by our people. It is still based on an attitude of a different race and colour, an attitude of superiority. Our children still go to school and read about drunken Indians. There's nothing about Native lives and cultures.



***Lynda**: The scope of the Program seems a lot broader than "literacy" as simply reading and writing.*

Carrie: It varies so much. Learners are at different levels. You can have a basic learner that has only had Grade 5, and then you get other people in the program who are older and have finished high school or Grade 10. They may have kept a lot of those skills yet want to improve on them. Besides the formal stuff, we also do the in-staff work, proof-reading letters and reports. Some of the staff also need to improve on their writing and speaking skills. We can provide workshops to help improve on this.

In the future we're hoping to do more group work with the learners. We're looking into mother-tongue literacy in Ojibway or Cree although you find a lot of Iroquis and Mohawk as well from Chaanganaway and Six Nations reserves which are quite close. Toronto is the gathering place of a lot of different Native nations.

Donna: The problem is that the Ministry, where we get our funds from, doesn't recognize Native languages as legitimate second or first languages. It's just English and French. So we wouldn't be able to get funds for this. We're trying to find other funding sources but are planning to just start it anyway. You can't wait around for the government to recognize Native languages as legitimate for literacy.

We also feel it's important to have a program that allows people to learn about

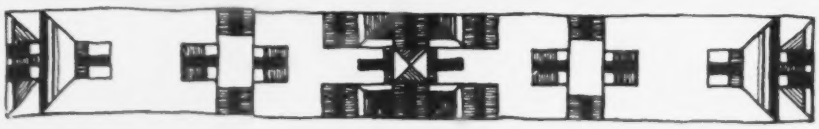
what's going on in the world. We've started a small library where a lot of the materials are by Native people. I've just started to set up a filing system where we've set up files on "world," "First Nations" and "women's" issues, things like that. People want to find out what's really happening; they want to be educated, not in a fantasy way, but in terms of reality. I know myself that's where I'd want to start.

Carrie: We're also trying to develop our own curriculum for our learners and for learners in other programs. The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition is an umbrella organization for all the Ontario Native Programs and a lot of their concerns are dealing with curriculum and educating the public on Native literacy issues.

Donna: I'd like to see our literacy program as a kind of model for white learners as well. Where they would say "oh, we like this way of learning." We're trying to change the education system altogether, to change the whole approach to learning and teaching. We think everyone has a lot to learn from what we're doing.

Carrie: And hopefully other people will use our approach.

Donna: But recognize it as a Native approach.



I Walk in the History of my People

by Chrystos*

There are women locked in my joints
for refusing to speak to the police
My red blood full of those
arrested in flight shot
My tendons stretched brittle with anger
do not look like white roots of peace
In my marrow are hungry faces
who live on land the whites don't want
In my marrow women who walk 5 miles every day for water
In my marrow the swollen hands of my people who are not allowed
to hunt
to move
to be
In the scars of my knees you can see
children torn from their families
bludgeoned into government schools
You can see through the pins in my bones
that we are prisoners of a long war
My knee is so badly wounded no one will look at it
The pus of the past oozes from every pore
This infection has gone on for at least 300 years
Our sacred beliefs have been made into pencils
names of cities gas stations
My knee is wounded so badly that I limp constantly
Anger is my crutch I hold myself upright with it
My knee is wounded
see
How I Am Still Walking

(from *Not Vanishing* published by Press Gang, Vancouver, 1988)

On the Training of Tutors for Women's Literacy:

A Woman's Experience with Women in Greece

"I have worked in Greece as a tutor in the program for illiterate women who lived in a depressed urban area of Athens. Within the framework of this program I have developed experimental teaching material. I am sending you an article about this experience with the hope that it may be useful to others."

For the implementation of an adult literacy program undertaken in 1984 by the General Secretariat for Popular Education there were two basic requirements: the development of suitable teaching material, and the instruction of tutors in matters relating to educational theory and teaching methods.

Within the framework of this program I undertook the development of experimental teaching material for use with adult illiterate women, while working as a tutor in a class of illiterate women that functioned in a depressed urban area of Athens for one school year. The development of the teaching material was based on the study of the educational theory and teaching method of Paulo Freire, and on teaching in the literacy class.

I believe that this combination of theory and practical classroom experience constitutes the correct method for the production of teaching materials for adult illiteracy. A fundamental component of the training must be the analysis of the method used in the production of teaching materials so that the tutor is able to adapt the available material or produce new material according to the needs and interests of the illiterate women.

by Danae Vaikoosi

Training Tutors for Women's Literacy

In May 1986, about eighty educators, most of them school teachers, took part in four five-day seminars arranged by the General Secretariat of Popular Education. During these seminars photocopies of the teaching material were distributed and discussed with the tutors along with other matters relating to the teaching of literacy.

The problems that arose for tutors during these training seminars were:

(a) The majority of the school-teachers taking part thought that primary school books were most suitable for women illiterates, believing at the same time that literacy is simply the mechanical acquisition of the ability to read and write. They also believed that discussion with the learners in an adult literacy class was a waste of time; they ignored the fact that through the discussions they would be able to pinpoint the needs of the learners, to cultivate the capacity of the learners to express themselves, to find starting-points for the lessons, to develop their own teaching material, and to create a pleasant and familiar environment during the lessons.

(b) The view that there should be different teaching material adapted to different groups' needs and interests was not easily understood or accepted. Extensive discussion of the need to modify the teaching material to suit the needs and interests of a given literacy class and to connect it to current affairs also proved necessary. Not all the participants were convinced of it.

(c) Participants asked many questions of this sort: "How many times a week will the class be held?", "How much material should be covered?", "Will the material be repeated?" and so on. It was evident that their experience of school-teaching made them want a detailed program which would lay down exactly what was to be taught and the time limits within which it should be covered.

(d) The majority of the teachers were ignorant of teaching and educational methods appropriate to adults. Many of the participants clung to schoolteaching methods which are suitable only for primary school children.

(e) Many of the teachers failed to appreciate the significance of some of the special problems that one often meets in an adult literacy class, for example:

- each of the students in a literacy class is at a different level, depending on what kind of work he or she does, what interests he or she has and how many attempts he or she has made alone to learn to read and write. For the tutor this means that teaching must be carried out on an individual basis.
- the illiterate usually have little self-confidence regarding their ability to learn to read and write. They need constant encouragement from the tutor who must stress their capacity to do a whole range of other things successfully.
- those who attend a literacy class have everyday obligations and responsibilities and come, consequently, to the lesson after a tiring day. It is natural therefore for their performance to be somewhat reduced and for them to want the lesson to be lively, interesting and pleasant, to relate to their needs and to give them some immediate sense of satisfaction, such as through learning to write their address or to read an advertisement in a newspaper. It was necessary, then, to keep pointing out the need for a positive "atmosphere"' to exist during the course of literacy classes.

My second experience of training tutors of women's literacy was connected with my work in the educational program of a non-state agency, KEMEA (Centre for Study and Self-Education).

KEMEA organised a one-year training program. The participants included unem-

ployed youths and graduates under twenty-five years of age. On completion of their course, one group of participants was to work in various special environments such as prisons, psychiatric clinics or - in collaboration with youth centres and women's organizations - in literacy classes for young people and women.

Before their training in women's literacy, the group of participants had attended seminars on sociology and education. During the training period the problems I mentioned earlier relating to the reproduction of school practices did not arise; there were no teachers among the participants. On the contrary, starting with their own memories of school, the participants recognised and accepted the need for a different educational process in adult literacy classes both with regard to teaching methods and teaching material. What appeared to be the basic problem was the excessive weight they attached to the significance of a dialogue during the course of the lesson - which turned into a fetish and a touch-stone for every problem - at the expense of teaching and the necessary teaching techniques.

They became absorbed in theoretical inquiries and issues and were often uninterested in teaching methods, which of course are essential for the teaching of reading and writing. In contrast with the schoolteacher trainees, with whom there was the danger of their turning literacy into an arid technique, the trainees with no teaching experience were in danger of getting lost in endless discussions.

Some proposals

On the basis of my experience in training tutors I am submitting for discussion these proposals:

(a) The training of tutors must combine theoretical knowledge and teaching practice.

(b) The education experiences and interests of the trainees must be taken into consideration as well as the particular problems which arise on each occasion.

(c) The participant trainees must be made sensitive to the special problems faced by the illiterate women.

(d) The training of tutors must take place in an atmosphere comparable to the atmosphere that they, as tutors, will have to create in the literacy classes.

EXCUSE ME . . .
BUT YOUR VOICE IS RISING!

(a request for contributions)

Voices Rising is published twice, soon to be three times per year (January, June, October) in English, French and Spanish. We welcome and need your contributions. Why not think about sending us:

✎ Informally written profiles (500 to 750 words) of your organization or work, including your constituencies, approach, difficulties you confront, successes, lessons learned, broader social and political context or any other relevant information.

✎ Articles (1000 to 2000 words) that detail and analyze issues or themes in women's education work - theoretical reflections on the practical.

✎ Materials your organization has published, or materials you have found interesting and useful in your work for annotation or review. These can be English, French or Spanish books, magazines, reports, or bibliographies.

✎ Reviews (500 to 1000 words) of publications you've found useful. (Or let us know if we can call on you to write a review for an upcoming issue.)

✎ Letters briefly telling us what you are up to, what you might need from others in the network, criticisms, questions, disagreements, new ideas. Informally written, of course.

✎ Announcements and Calls to Action

If you want more detail or would like to explore an idea for an article please write to us attention *Voices Rising*. Deadlines for the next issues are April and August 1990.

EXPANDING THE "GENERATIVE WORD" PROCESS: Women's Iron Will, Haiti

This article was previously published under the title "Women's Literacy project in Haiti" in *Adult Education and Development 31*, 1988:25-34, a half- yearly journal published by the German Adult Education Association. The article is a shortened version of the original, which is in German. Anyone interested in more background information or a copy of the article, write to Beate at her address below.

by Beate Schmidt

The literacy project in Haiti was carried out over a period of two years (1986-1988) with three groups (rural and urban), each with approximately 15 participants. The project was conceived and carried out by a group of ten Haitian women. While the preparation was carried out by one group without any financial assistance, the execution and evaluation (14 months) was financed by a Dutch organization that has supported various projects in Haiti. Beate Schmidt was coordinator and educational advisor.

Aims of the project were:

1) To provide reading, writing and arithmetical material related to the everyday life and the specific problems of the women participating.

2) To give women the opportunity to get to know each other, to discuss their problems, to organize themselves and to plan long-term joint activities.

3) To support women interested in planning suitable income-yielding activities through the establishment of a fund from which revolving credit at low interest could be made available.

Selection of the target groups

Three target groups were planned for participation in the project in order to collect sufficient data to facilitate a comparison between the groups. At the start of the project there were two groups in Port-au-Prince and one group in the country, about five hours drive away. All groups arose through personal contact; the women were eager to learn to read and write, so that no motivation work was necessary. A further, significant selection criterion was the more or less homogenous structure of the group in relation to their economic activities. This meant that eventual joint activities would be easier.

The women in one group were market women who sold mainly food items. None of them had an income exceeding US$30 a month. The women in the second group were, with one exception, unemployed. All had attended school for one year but had left because their parents were no longer able to pay the fees. Motivation for participation in a literacy course varied. One frequently mentioned reason was not having to be ashamed any more at not being able to read and thus being taken for ignorant.

Outline of a provisional learning program

The literacy program was directed, as far as possible, at the interests of the participants. The following steps were taken in the initial meetings with the women, questions regarding organization were clarified and the project introduced. The tutors took down an exact account of the women's situation in order to gain insight into their problems. These general discussions on their situation as women were recorded, evaluated according to linguistic criteria and classified thematically. Apart from this, the women were given a preliminary test to determine their reading and writing abilities. In these classes an initial introduction to reading and writing vowels took place. The actual program was then prepared on a weekly basis so that the week's evaluation could be taken into consideration in the planning of the next cless. All the classes were recorded so that the wealth of information resulting from the discussions could be evaluated afterwards. In this way, certain themes could be dealt with in more depth and persistent problems connected with individual sounds or letters attended to more systematically.

The program consisted of three phases:

1) The aim of the first phase was to be able to read and write all vowels and consonants and to form simple words and sentences with them.

2) The aim of the second phase was to read and write words and sentences containing combined consonants as, for example, in *gwoses* (pregnancy) or *legliz* (church).

3) In the third phase emphasis was placed on writing stories and the practical application of skills in everyday life.

We also planned to teach basic calculation skills by way of practical activities, such as calculating revenue and expenditure for the organization of a party.

In the first informal talks with the women, three main themes crystallized. They related to their work, reproduction, and participation. Sub-themes were compiled which together made up the program. Each theme was introduced by way of a generative word within a sentence.

Work: The participants analyze their working situation. They draw up an exact time-study to provide information on activities which are the most time-consuming and where eventual changes can be made. We ask, "Can the introduction of suitable technology be a first step in reducing the workload of women?" We study the causes for women's double and treble workload and the significance of the organization for realizing their own interests.

Respect and self-respect: Although women in Haiti play an important role in society and the economy, the predominant image of women - easily recognizable from Haitian proverbs - is negative. The women analyze what effect this negative attitude towards women has on their own view of themselves and how they can overcome the consequences. Leading Haitian women and their struggle for equality are discussed.

Reproduction: This comprises all themes concerning relationships, sexuality, pregnancy, birth and so on. The women have the opportunity to get to know their bodies better in order to have more control over family planning. The important role of women in health care is discussed as well as the problem of women being superseded in this practice by modern medicine.

Participation: We discuss women's participation in decision making processes at all levels of society. Balance of power and the rights of women are analyzed. Women form their own ideas on development and draw up strategies for putting them into practice.

"Work" Examples:

Content	Word
The life of a woman	*lavi* (life)
The inferiority of female work, underpaid or not paid at all, double and treble workload of women.	*beseleve* (to bend, to lift)
The tools which women use for their work.	*zouti* (tool)

"Respect and Self-Respect" Examples:

Content	Word
The woman as pillar of the family.	*potomitan* (pillar)
Image of women in society.	*fanm vanyan*
International Women's Day.	*uit mas*

"Reproduction" Examples:

Content	Word
Relationship between man and woman.	*fezafe* (relationship)
Violence towards women.	*kenbe* (to rape)
Menstruation and pregnancy.	*gwoses* (pregnancy)
Contraception and abortion.	*dilatasyon* (abortion)

"Participation" Examples:

Content	Word
Division of power between women and men.	*pouvwa* (power)
What laws can women appeal to?	*lalwa* (law)
Forms of organization for putting development into practice.	*tetansanm* (together)

Evaluation of the project

The participating groups differed considerably with respect to interest, cooperation, dynamics and attendance. A feature shared by all women was the iron will to learn to read and write and the subsequent hope that their problems would then be solved. At the beginning of the project, their interests were very individual; each person wanted to gain the most personal profit from the course. During the classes a feeling of trust emerged and the readiness to try something out together; perhaps due to the insight that it is easier to seek a solution to problems together.

The ideal occasion for the first joint "test of courage" was International Women's Day. Many national organizations arranged events and, thanks to the intensive publicity work of many newly established women's groups, practically the whole population was informed about it.

Two of the project groups became involved in festivities. The Port-au-Prince group wrote a small play entitled *Tetansanm* (Together). It was about a woman who encouraged fellow women to join her in opening up a small business with their collective capital. The business runs well, the women make a small profit and they leave the stage dancing and singing. This five-minute play was greeted enthusiastically by the audience. The group of rural women organized a lovely festival for their village and visitors from surrounding districts. They had learnt dances and written plays and poems about the situation of rural women.

On the day before the festival the school director refused to let them have the hall that he had previously promised them. The women were not prepared, however, to be robbed of their festival, and without a moment's hesitation they stormed the school building and forced the director to hand over the key. The festival was a great success. In both groups these experiences helped to build up the self-confidence of the women.

Although more attention has been given to problems surrounding literacy work with women in recent times, there is still a lack of initiative aimed at changing women's situations. The initiative should be grasped and developed by women themselves so that they have their development in their own hands.

The concept introduced here is coupled with the hope that reading and writing skills will be used as a tool in securing a dignified human existence for women and thus for all people. Such a tool, however, can only function in a context where the social and political conditions linked to the well-being of everyone, exist.

I am very interested in contacting women working on the development of literacy materials geared towards women's needs for an exchange of information and experiences.

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West Germany

PUBLISHING WOMEN'S STORIES

Parkdale Project Read, Toronto, Canada

Janet Ryan has been a learner at Parkdale Project Read in Toronto, Canada and works to get other people involved in literacy programs. She is currently editing a book that she wrote and preparing it for publication. *She's Speaking Out* is about Janet's life and the difficulties she has encountered in not being able to read and write. The book will be published by Parkdale Project Read in early 1990.

I didn't give up yet. I still went looking for a job. I found a job making soap. Two months later, I got laid off because there was no work. I went to the unemployment office and I looked on the board and I couldn't read what was on the board. I went home and cried and my Mom said, "What happened?"

"I can't find a job and when I ask for help they say 'what do you need help with to find a job?' I tell the people at the unemployment office I can't read the job board. They say the they don't have the time to help me read the job board and that makes me feel bad and sad that there was nothing there for me."

❖ ❖ ❖

I moved into High Park and that's where my new life began. I was just doing my laundry one day and that's where I saw the number for a literacy program.

❖ ❖ ❖

I started a literacy program in Parkdale at the Parkdale Public Library on Queen Street West. The staff were good to me and it was a new beginning and a new life for me. I really enjoy learning to read and write.

❖ ❖ ❖

And I got involved in planning International Literacy Day. And it was a lot of fun and a lot of work and I learned a lot of new ways to help other people get into literacy programs.

Excerpt from *She's Speaking Out: What is it like to be Illiterate?* by Janet Ryan.

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Betsy Trumpener works at Parkdale Project Read and is helping Janet with her book.

Betsy: *How did you get started writing your story?*

Janet: One of the staff at Parkdale Project Read asked me. I would probably never have thought to do it myself. I just wrote down things that had happened in my life. The people at Parkdale said, "Don't worry about the spelling, we can go back and change things later." It took me about a year to write a book. I just wrote a bit every week. When I had it all written, I worked with tutors. I just made a few changes, adding a few things and correcting the spelling. I made a list of some learners, staff, and tutors, in the program. I had them read it and offer suggestions.

Betsy: *Do you think being a woman has affected the way that you write?*

Janet: I think men don't put their feelings in as much as woman do, so I think there's lots of things in my book that a man might not have put in. He'd be too embarrassed.

Betsy: *What would you say to women in literacy programs who might never have thought of writing a story and getting it published as a book?*

Janet: I would tell them: I thought the same way you probably feel, but I encourage you to give it a try. Afterwards, you'll feel really good about yourself. I feel good because I've written a book on my own and had no one tell me what to say.

Is It Her Voice If She Speaks Their Words?

Going through life and not finding your experiences represented is what literacy learners experience. It is powerful when literacy learners get together in groups and name their experiences. We have learned from feminism the power of getting together with people who think and speak the same as you do: when your experiences are confirmed you know you are not crazy.

Language experience stories told by learners to tutors are part of good pedagogy. The stories create effective learning exercises for literacy students. They may also be shared with other learners because they are good learning materials. Learners find these stories interesting when they see their own struggles reflected. Because the language of learners is used in the stories they are easy to read. Language experience stories can also provide a source of inexpensive and creative reading material where materials are sorely needed.

But these stories, if they are part of critical pedagogy, will also have another dimension. This dimension will reflect the intention to bring learners' language into the public sphere. It is within this sphere that the stories demonstrate their power and make visible the class, race and gender bias in language.

It is a transformative act to document learners' lives, to publish oral histories and to bring them into the public realm. Through this act we are challenging what is considered to be literature.

Elaine Gaber-Katz and Jenny Horsman, Women and Literacy, *Canadian Studies*

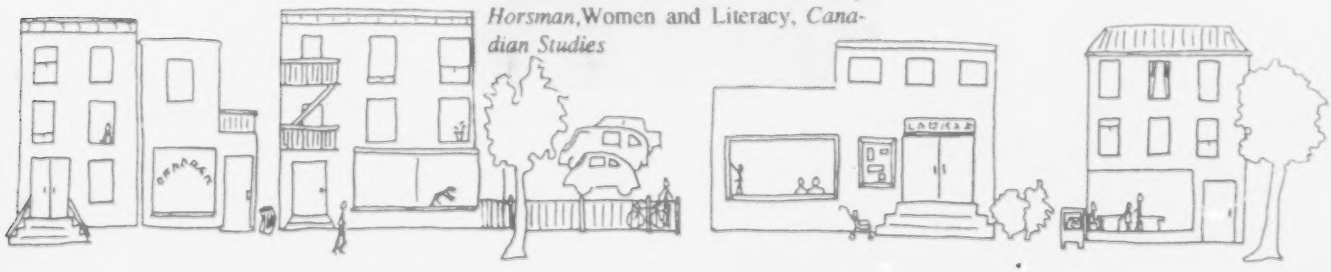
Parkdale Project Read

Parkdale Project Read is a 9 year old community literacy program located in the neighbourhood of Parkdale in Toronto, Canada. About 40 pairs of adult learners and volunteer tutors work together in our program. Another 30 learners attend small learning groups and literacy drop-ins at various times during the week. One of these groups is a Women's Group. Another group meets weekly to work on and generate learner writing.

Our program's purpose is to empower people, by means of improved literacy skills, to participate more fully in decisions that affect their lives. We encourage learners to make decisions about how and what they learn and also to participate in the organization and development of the program. As in other community programs, learners sit on our Board of Directors, help to hire new staff, and participate in program committees.

Learner participation in the program keeps us honest - and aware of some of our shortcomings. The daytime Women's Group, for example, developed out of our growing awareness that many women learners were not being served by our traditional programming.

Betsy Trumpener



Parkdale Project Read 1303 Queen St. West Toronto, Ontario M6K 1L6 (416) 531-6308

DEVELOPING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

SISTREN's Research Workshop

SISTREN's response to problems is collective, creative and dynamic. When some of the actresses were having difficulty scripting their scenes, the group organized a research workshop in reading skills - a workshop which incorporated dance, calisthenics and games as part of the learning process.

Honor Ford-Smith, a member of SISTREN Theatre Collective, tells of the group's experiences:

The workshop had as its objective the creation of dramatic exercises which would teach comprehension and reading skills and develop the critical consciousness of the student. This was the first research workshop in which SISTREN participated.... During the group's first major production, *Bellywoman Bangarang*, the women were asked to script scenes they had created from their own experiences. At this point, I learned that some of the women in the project had more developed reading skills than others. These actresses were able to help others script their scenes and by the end of the production, interest in reading about their personal experiences motivated many to practice their new skills. By the time we got to our second major production, everyone could read her own script.

The research workshop investigated what took place in this process more carefully. In workshop, a wide range of work was done. Physical exercises were based on the shape of the letters. Calisthenics were developed based on the alphabet and, in one case, a dance created from the spelling of the letters of words. Rhythmic sounds and games accompanied these so that letters and sounds were identified. Writing exercises were linked to exercises in conflict resolution, personal awareness and group development. A great many of the exercises have been developed from Augusto Boal's method of problem solving skits. In these, the group develops to a climax a skit on a particular theme. They then stop and ask the rest of the group how the problem should be solved. After a discussion, the solution is enacted.

Reading exercises were often taken from the newspaper. The study of articles in the paper and their accompanying pictures is another example of the type of exercise the group used. After looking at a picture, the women acted out what went before and after the moment captured in the scene. They then read, in character, the newspaper report, and commented on its truthfulness in discussion.

The results of these workshops were recorded by the members of SISTREN and some of the scenes scripted. All writing was done in Creole, since the Creole language is the women's main medium of communication. The Creole was then translated into English. Writing in dialect, with its improvised spelling and immediate flavour, the women learned to write a form of English which had previously been considered "bad, coarse and vulgar." In fact, Jamaican Creole is a variation of English with its own strict rules of grammar, a language which retains much of the Twi construction of its creators. By writing a language which had hitherto been that of a non-literate people, the women broke the silence.

From *Worldlit: Newsletter of World Literacy of Canada*
692 Coxwell Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4C 3B6

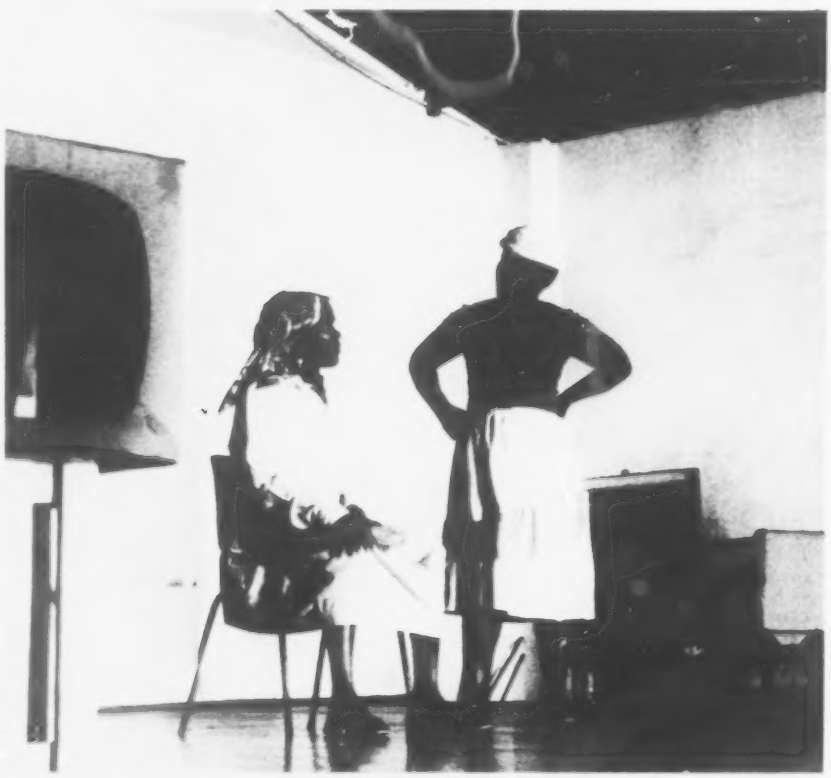


PHOTO SISTREN

by Honor Ford-Smith

A LITERACY KIT FOR PEASANT WOMEN IN MEXICO

by Leonor Aide Concha, Maria del Carmen Montes, and Sylvia Van Dyck

In the last decade, peasant women in Mexico have begun to develop their own organizational processes. They are increasingly struggling for their specific gender concerns, without ceasing to participate with men in the struggle for land and services, and against repression.

Peasant women's high level of illiteracy (total and functional) is an obstacle to this process. Literacy is being raised more seriously as a legitimate concern. To learn to read and write requires consistency and discipline and it is difficult to find appropriate material and trained women educators.

Given this reality, Mujeres para el Diálogo [Women for Dialogue]* began a project to develop a Literacy Kit to meet the needs of peasant women involved in a variety of organizational processes. With the financial support of a Christian women's group in Stein, Germany, LOLA was produced. It is a manual for facilitators, including a poster for generative words.

The three-woman team in charge of this project tried to capture the theoretical advances in the field of adult literacy. The basic methodology is the one developed by Paulo Freire. The kit intends to link the learning process to an examination and transformation of the reality of the peasants for whom the kit was produced.

The main theme is peasant women's reality. The process begins with a "discovery" of peasant women's identity in terms of what is being done in their daily lives inside and outside their homes. A reflection on family relationships follows, relationships with their mates, with their children and with their communities' traditions and customs. These are followed by a critical examination of education, media and health services. Finally, there is a structural analysis of the Mexican reality (social classes, repression, who owns what in the country, history, etc).

Both theme and methodological development are important in the process. Each lesson (which can be developed in several sessions according to the group's pace) includes a photo on the theme, a generative word, a reading on the topic, questions for discussion, and writing and reading exercises. The kit includes 31 lessons. Reading is in print, writing by hand. It was intended that each lesson include only one new linguistic element, beginning with the most simple and frequent Spanish forms.

The manual for facilitators is a support resource for literacy educators training. It is expected that a week-long workshop developed in conjunction with the manual will enable women who read and write to facilitate literacy training for the illiterate women in their organizations.

We have already held the first training workshop for literacy educators. We are eagerly waiting for the results to show in practice what resulted from this first group of volunteers taking on the challenge of this difficult process together with their compañeras.

**Mujeres para el Diálogo [Women for Dialogue] is a women's non-government organization, of Christian background, peasant and popular women's groups in their educational and organizing efforts.*

Mujeres Para el Dialogo
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Lola Manual

We know that there are many women who don't read and write.

This situation puts limits on women to solve certain problems, to learn new things and to improve their lives.

Women who do not read and write, as any other women,

- know and do many things
- can do some accounting in their mind
- they know what they want and what they need.

Women who do not read and write have amassed a great deal of experienc throughout their lives. Not reading and writing has not prevented them from:

- developing their memory
- passing on their knowledge
- doing some accounting
- developing their social consciousness
- developing popular organization to transform life conditions
- building women's organizations

What these women have not been able to achieve is to learn to read and write to have more information, which is available in a written form and to communicate their own experience to other people in writing. We want to help women to achieve this.

In some cases, it is believed that illiteracy means that adults can't learn to recognize letters and words or to write them. This is true, but it is only part of it, because literacy's goals broader. Literacy aims to achieve that an adult:

- Understands what she is reading
- Expresses what she thinks in a written form
- Applies reading and writing to her daily life.

For women to be interested in literacy, it will be necessary to link what they are learning with:

- The search for solutions to their problems and needs.
- What they would like to do with reading and writing.

Women who want to become literate will have the opportunity to join the a group to reflect on their problems, search for solutions and to listen to others and thus strengthen and broaden their knowledge. This is a different way of learning.

Excerpt from LOLA, Manual

1990 International Literacy Year

Agenda, Comments, Challenges

The moment the United Nations declared 1990 as International Literacy Year, the international literacy movement began to consider how the Year could strengthen the movement in every corner of the world. The U.N. plan of action is to "help Member States in all regions to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000." A UNESCO statement says that "International Literacy Year (ILY) should not be a 'celebration' but a summons to action." UNESCO will be encouraging action among member states and increasing public awareness and popular participation.

In this framework, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) initiated an International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) to facilitate the involvement of primarily non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the grassroots of the literacy movement in preparations for the Year.

The Task Force envisions a year which will mark the beginning of a 10 year intensive effort to: dramatically reduce illiteracy in the world; mobilize resources from the grassroots and factory floors through governments and educational institutions; recognize that illiteracy is a problem of both industrialized and non-industrialized nations; not confuse a campaign against illiteracy with a campaign against illiterate people; link literacy to the achievements of social, economic and political democracy; strengthen the organizations of women, the poor, the jobless and the landless; result in increased empowerment of people, not increased dependency; and result most importantly in strengthened permanent structures for promoting literacy and adult education at governmental and non-governmental levels.

(excerpted from *1990: International Literacy Year*)

1990: International Literacy Year is the newsletter of the International Task Force on Literacy. The newsletter is available in English, French and Spanish free of charge by writing to the ITFL Coordinating Office, 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 2R4.

A report entitled "A Practical Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations, UNESCO Clubs, Associated Schools and Other Interested Groups" has been prepared by the NGO Standing Committee. It contains suggestions for activities for International Literacy Year. This and other reports on preparations for ILY can be obtained by writing to: Secretariat for International Literacy Year, UNESCO House, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

The definition of empowerment means not only the ability to have individual action but the ability to see the problem as a group problem and therefore to see the collective dimensions of the problem and the possiblities for collective solutions to the problem.

Nellie Stromquist

FIVE CHALLENGES TO WOMEN'S LITERACY*

The challenges facing women's literacy are formidable. But this does not mean that they cannot be met. They will have to be taken into account simultaneously and they will need persistent attention. Action without theory, decoding/encoding skills without an understanding of how oppression emerges and persists, the unquestioned use of state agencies, the accumulation of unanswered questions regarding literacy process, and legislation without enactment, are fundamental and actual conditions that inhibit the social transformation required to make women's literacy a part of the social order.

1.

THE CHALLENGE OF FEMINIST THEORY. Many empirical studies have generated a long list of factors influencing the condition of women and affecting women's primary and formal education - lack of time, lack of motivation, distance to class or school, family responsibilities, opposition by husbands or fathers, and so on. Taken as "obstacles" to women's literacy, they become the basis for policy. But this confuses the immediate manifestations of women's subordination with fundamental factors behind them. Solutions that accommodate women's lack of time are short term and actually accommodate a status quo detrimental to women. The challenge of feminist theory is to uncover the systematic mechanisms behind such "obstacles." Feminist scholars have identified two mutually supportive and powerful mechanisms of subordination; the sexual division of labour and the control of women's sexuality. These concepts increase our analytical power to understand how conditions of women's subordination persist and how change will take more than just ingenious program design. Feminist theory helps us locate "obstacles" in specific man-made institutions that form the society in which we live, so we can take a more sceptical analytical look at the state, the diffuse set of social forces that we call culture, the family, education. In the family and in the community or society, a notion of virginity, a sexual double standard, women's lack of physical mobility and physical violence in the household produce a psychological constraint on women's activities and a real control of their activities via their sexuality. We need to use a conceptual framework that looks behind the "obstacles" to women's literacy and women's development to a systematic order of control.

2.

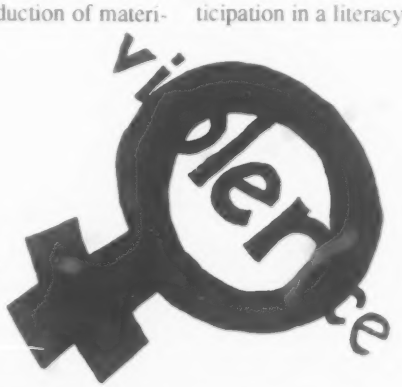
THE CHALLENGE OF STRATEGY. With the global economic and financial crises and because of the sexual division of labour, women bear the burden of reproduction as well as take on productive responsibilities and struggle for rights in labour legislation. How can we be sensitive to the tensions in women's responsibilities? How do we make sure that they're not simply engaged in a solution of basic needs but are moving towards a social restructuring? The strategic challenge is how to develop productive programs that allow women to have access to financial resources, to remunerated wages, but at the same time not make the mistake of simply moving the problem from reproduction to production. The first strategic challenge to literacy programs is how to combine women's practical (reproductive) needs and their strategic needs (changing the sexual division of labour, the conditions of women as workers, their legal rights, and their rights as

*These five challenges are based on Nellie Stromquist's presentation "Women and Literacy, What Next?" at the 1989 Symposium on Women and Literacy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Stockholm, Sweden, and on the revised written version "Challenges to the Attainment of Women's Literacy", Nellie Stromquist, School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031 USA.

autonomous citizens). A second strategic challenge is to design literacy programs that combine political/psychological knowledge with skills aimed at remunerative work, and income-generating projects that include not only literacy skills but such skills as collective organization and gender consciousness. A third strategic challenge is to understand and combat the false dichotomies in discourses on social and gender transformation - productivity versus equity, efficiency versus equity, women's empowerment versus the "danger" brought to their well-being by empowerment. A fourth strategic challenge is to pay as much attention to the process of women's literacy as to the outcome. We need to be attentive to how women learn and be willing to utilize all existing spaces for action.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING AGENCY SELECTION.

If we want to have literacy for women, who gets to do it? Systematic studies of program implementation have been very few. Evaluations of UNESCO experimental programs conducted by government agencies in 11 countries for 2-5 years in the late sixties provide overwhelming evidence that some of the benefits that supposedly accrue from government action –coordination, a more rational and sophisticated teacher training, development of materials, outreach to a large number of populations in need, production of materials sensitive to the needs of various groups and coordination among the various levels of government, between education and agriculture, agriculture and health and so on– do not materialize. If we want to serve the needs of women in literacy programs, then it is sensible that social sectors other than the state should be given a role in the provision of education. Especially for women, non governmental organizations run by women represent a very powerful avenue for the incorporation of changes, and for creative, innovative, holistic approaches to the education of women. Those who have given the greatest degree of invention and commitment have been NGOs, and they need to be given much more attention.



4. THE CHALLENGE OF RESEARCH.

Many issues remain to be investigated when we are trying to understand the condition of women. We need to have a much greater understanding of the household dynamics that affect the participation of women and how the negotiation of decision making within the family affects how women enter literacy programs or wish to enter literacy programs. We still need to have much more evidence on what are effective techniques to deal with adult women, and on what is an effective mix of visual and text stimuli in the production of literacy programs. Literacy programs go beyond technical programs, but we still need that information. We need more information on the kinds of supportive settings that enable women to enter and sustain participation in a literacy program, and on the physical and psychological constraints on women's participation at the community level as well as the household level.

The research challenge is also to produce a knowledge which breaks the subject/object dichotomy, so that in the process illiterate women are part of, and become able to see themselves as a part of, larger processes that organize literacy/illiteracy.

5. THE CHALLENGE OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION.

Policy provides leverage for action to gain women's legal rights in practice, where international pressure may be brought to bear such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified by 54 countries. Significantly, most of the countries that have not yet ratified the convention include African and Arab countries with high rates of female illiteracy. While laws and official commitment exist, concrete programming lags. The challenge is to lobby governments to force their attention to programs, and to convince international aid agencies to use groups outside the state for the provision of literacy to women.

Welcome International Literacy Year 1990 as a measure to bring attention and reflection to these problems and challenges. A decade will not be enough to gain the financial and organizational support required to meet them. States will have to work with women and NGOs, and men will have to be persuaded that we all stand to gain as a restructured social order emerges.

DEEPENING THE ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES OF ILY

Much of the accepted wisdom about literacy needs to be critically examined in relation to advances and retreats in literacy over the past decades. The period prior to and during ILY could be seen as a time for intense questioning and debate, along with a solid program of research and evaluation. The findings from these activities would allow the international literacy movement to launch a decade of work on literacy between 1990 and 2000 on a much surer footing.

Literacy, Democracy and Empowerment

Empowerment through literacy is seen as having to do not only with empowerment in the larger society, but also in the power relations of learner/teacher or facilitator in the literacy classroom. If literacy is understood not only as reading and writing skills but also as having a "voice," a space for action in one's society, how do we understand the forces that impede literacy? In what ways do new literacy skills actually bring empowerment within families, communities, workplaces and societies? Does this work differently for women than for men? What chance is there of using new literacy skills in the current economic crisis when there are no books and no literate environment anyway?

Images Of Literacy and the Literate

Illiteracy often becomes part of a broad social pathology that implicitly or explicitly blames illiteracy for the social problems of unemployment, poor health, low productivity, weak family management, and school failure. There are war metaphors ("campaigns to eradicate illiteracy," "the battle of the book," "pencils as weapons.") There are health metaphors (illiteracy as a "plague" or a "scourge.") What would more adequate images of literacy and the illiterate look like? How will this be different in the North and the South? Given the stigma of illiteracy in the industrialized countries, is there a danger that ILY publicity will result in driving illiterates underground? How can we build a communications strategy into the ITFL?

Liberatory Goals

Literacy programs understood as a process of liberation at times have shown more concern with conscientization than with actual reading and writing skills, while in reality both must be accomplished simultaneously. We need better articulation between governments, NGOs and popular social movements to get the right mix for realizing both technical/pedagogical goals and political/ideological goals.

Teachers

Are trained teachers a huge potential resource for literacy–or a guarantee of failure? In some countries teachers are seen as inextricably tied into authoritarian, traditional, vertical teaching processes, the antithesis of the pedagogy of empowerment espoused by popular educators.

South-North Exchanges

There are very different uses for literacy skills in the literacy environments of industrialized and non-industrialized countries. We need to combat the marginalization of literacy workers in industrialized countries, within the world literacy movement in general, and in the specific context of ILY preparations. We need South-North exchanges in order to feed the long and rich experience and action on literacy in the South into the North.

Women's Literacy

Women's experiences of illiteracy and the doors opened to them by new literacy skills are fundamentally different from those

by Judith Marshall

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of men. New abilities to speak, read, write and count work for men in different ways than they do for women. And the willingness of illiterate women and men to make a time commitment to literacy is determined largely by their assessment of what kinds of doors will be opened to them by literacy. We need to create opportunities for women to speak about their experiences of literacy. This includes paying attention both to the assumptions about women's role in a society that silences literate women and also to the specific structural constraints of domestic labour and childcare that impede women's participation in literacy.

There are widespread practices of literacy throughout the world in very small groups, often of ten or twelve people at the local level. Given that NGOs tend to be very weakly linked, often this work in literacy finds NGOs reinventing the wheel. In some regions, such as Latin America, there has been a widespread NGO abandonment of literacy, with priorities now put on conscientization, cooperatives, women, health, etc. How do we understand this? And are these other activities appropriate points of entry for literacy at a later phase?

Research about actual literacy practices should be carried out and communicated in such a way as to have immediate usefulness for these involved in literacy at the grassroots. There should be concrete case studies of real successes and failures. Approaches should be based on action research and participatory evaluation models. Full use should be made of already existing research and evaluation structures, including existing ICAE networks, universities, institutes, and so on.

We need not question the "why" of literacy. What we need are much clearer strategies for "how" and "when" and "with whom" for literacy to be effective within the larger process of strategies both for survival and economic/political/social change.

Judith is a member of the International Task Force on Literacy. This is an abridged version of her report to the Women's Leadership Development Seminar in International Adult Eduction, Quito, Equador, October 1988.

SOBERING THOUGHTS

Literacy For What? Strategies With Women in Mind

Excerpts from a report by Lalita Ramdas, Society for Alternatives in Education, New Delhi, India from her report to the International Task Force on Literacy, April, 1989.

Radical rhetoric is no substitute for change in practice. For millions of people, reality continues to be a life of toil, struggle, hunger, ill health and little hope. Learning to read and write is a meaningless skill under circumstances where they can feed themselves only by selling their labour and that of their children and where struggles for more justice are met with violence from the same State that promised them so much.

Literacy needs to be redefined drastically. Literacy cannot remain at the level of learning the alphabet and signing your name. Today thousands of groups are working at the lowest levels of the social order, with or without government support, to enable those people to obtain in reality all the promises of freedom and justice.

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The view of literacy as an important tool of democratic rights, liberation struggles, and equality for every citizen is not universally shared. Regarding women and equality, for example, we are assuming that most Indians or most men in our society can see that equality for women is an ideal value and that literacy for women and girls is a must. Similarly, the "small family norm" has been accepted by the State as a desirable goal. How have women been involved in that decision? And how can literacy help to realize that goal?

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Can literacy provide jobs and employment? Can literacy empower people to stand up for their rights, to demand what is legitimately theirs without inviting repression, violence and imprisonment? Can literacy counter patriarchy and truly lead to women's equality?

Our community workers are indifferent. Their concerns centre on whether it will help them get decent space or a building or books in the hands of each learner, or to deal with the drought or the revival of sati (women burning themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres), and whether it will help them cope with violence in the community. Many have given up on adult literacy and believe we should mobilize efforts to ensure that children get a decent education and become literate, as the best method for long-term adult literacy.

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It is not enough to run special programs for women. Some of the hope for women's literacy rests on hard work with men regarding women's equality. We are fighting an ideological and practical battle over the views of women and their roles in society. Unless traditional values of and attitudes towards women and women's roles in society are tackled directly and honestly, women will continue to be mere "objects" of development, or of literacy programs, instead of active, free and willing partners and participants of their own.

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World organizations routinely and grandiosely declare International Year after International Year. Governments and UN groups whip into action. Millions are spent on the production of glossy brochures, campaigns, hand-outs, seminars and consultancies. Activity peaks mid-year. The media keep the issue alive. Barely does the curtain come down on the Year for Women, then preparations begin for the Year of the...Child, Disabled, Aged, Homeless. But what of 'business as usual?" Who draws up the balance sheet at the end of it all? Is it only left to the busy accountants and auditors of countless organizations the world over?

Lalita Ramdas
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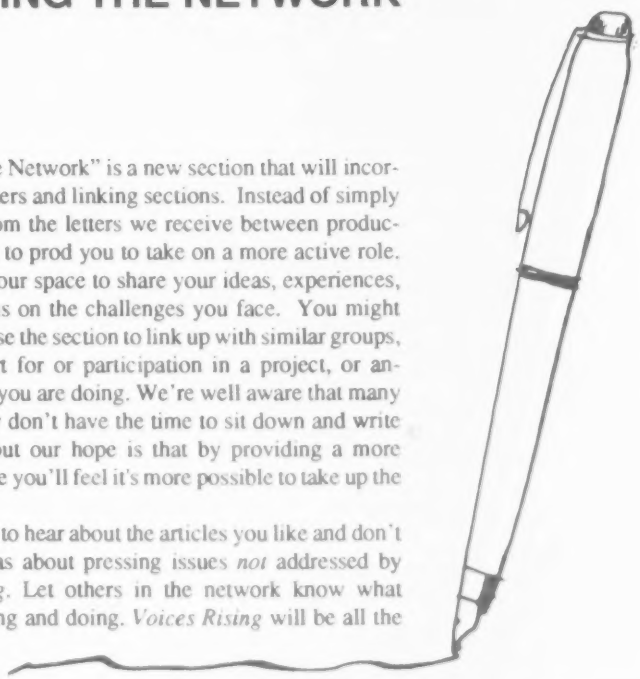
BUILDING THE NETWORK



"Building The Network" is a new section that will incorporate our letters and linking sections. Instead of simply excerpting from the letters we receive between production, we want to prod you to take on a more active role. This can be your space to share your ideas, experiences, and reflections on the challenges you face. You might also want to use the section to link up with similar groups, solicit support for or participation in a project, or announce work you are doing. We're well aware that many of you simply don't have the time to sit down and write full articles but our hope is that by providing a more informal space you'll feel it's more possible to take up the debate.

We want to hear about the articles you like and don't like as well as about pressing issues *not* addressed by *Voices Rising*. Let others in the network know what you're thinking and doing. *Voices Rising* will be all the richer for it.

KISIM SAVE SKUL BILONG OL MERI:

Urban Skills Program for Women, Goroka, Papua New Guinea

I am an Australian Volunteer Abroad (AVA) employed by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. My job title is "Field Training Officer" and I came to Papua New Guinea in July 1988 to work with the YWCA to plan, develop and implement a non-formal education program for women in the Goroka YWCA's recently constructed multipurpose building.

Through a process of consultation with local women and with individuals, agencies and organizations working with women, a program relevant to the women's needs has been gradually developed. The overwhelming request from the women themselves for activities at the Training Centre was for "tok pisin" literacy. With this objective in sight, the urban skills program has been developed to incorporate, initially, literacy and later numeracy and practical skills such as how to open and operate a bank account, legal awareness and health care.

During the early days I wrote to agencies, organizations and individuals within the country and internationally working on Women in Development issues, initiating valuable networking links and acquiring the most recent and relevant information and material available on work with women and literacy. Development workers shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel every time we go into the field. With networking we learn from each other's succcess and failures; expecially working with women, so much of our history gets "lost."

We started with two groups of women from two different parts of Goroka: North Goroka and a neighbouring village, Masilakaufa. We now have five groups. Each group attends the Training Centre twice a week. Interest expressed by local women has been very high, and the eagerness with which these women arrive every day is very rewarding and inspiring.

Literacy is a real need in these women's lives. Women's illiteracy rates in Papua New Guinea are between 75-80 percent, so we have plenty of willing participants. Fifteen to fifty year olds are coming with equal keenness and almost all of them have never been to school before. Most of the women say that they never thought they'd get the opportunity to learn to read and write after having missed out on attending school as children.

The Training Centre has an experienced Kisim Save teacher, Anna Maben, who has been active in women's activities in Simbu Province previously. We are existing on very little money at the moment, and we have started the program with bare essentials only: mats, a blackboard, butcher's paper and chalk. We received a small grant from the Australian High Commission which has helped us purchase some Kisim Save literacy kits from Christian Books Melanesia, other pidgin books and teaching aids, and a little furniture. We are optimistic about a submission we have made to the National Government's Literacy Development Program, and also to the Australian YWCA for funding.

We have many ideas for the Training Centre. I am presently compiling a list of resource people who are willing to come and lead sessions regularly in their particular fields, for instance, a woman solicitor, a health educator, a Christian Institute of Counselling volunteer. I am endeavouring to build up local resources so that the program can be maintained on its own.

I would like to organize a workshop to train Kisim Save teachers. There has been a lot of interest expressed by women leaders of particular church women's fellowship groups locally to learn how to teach so that they can introduce a Kisim Save program into their own work. By providing resources and training, we can encourage the opportunity for Kisim Save to be extended to a wider network of women.

Enabling women to become literate is an essential tool in encouraging women's development. Literacy rates are significant when looking at infant mortality and general health statistics, and it seem the two are

directly linked. I have found from personal experience of our Kisim Save Skul in Goroka that women's self esteem and confidence and general understanding of themselves and the world around them is hugely increased as they become literate. If women see themselves as capable and intelligent human beings, as they are beginning to, instead of "mi meri tasol, mi samting nating," they will demand and command respect in this society.

Please feel free to contact me for further information about Kisim Save Skul Bilong Ol Meri. Or better still, drop in and see us if you're in the neighbourhood. Visitors are always most welcome, and then the women themselves can tell you about our "lik lik skul."

Debbie Chapman
Field Training Officer
YWCA Goroka
P.O. Box 636,
Goroka, EHP,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Ed Note: A more recent report from Debbie outlines numerous plans for the Next Year. These include:

1) In 1990, UN International Literacy Year, the Y's Women's Training Centre will be encouraging, supporting and initiating literacy projects wherever possible throughout Papua New Guinea. Publicity, information dissemination and visits will be used to encourage projects as well as direct sharing of ideas, resources and materials.

2) A workshop is planned to train interested local women to initiate and run literacy projects. Funding has been received from the New Zealand High Commissioner and documentation and packaging will be able to be duplicated in other parts of the country. The Goroka Training Cente will become a resource centre as well as provide direct programming to the women of Goroka.

3) More production of material in 'tok pisin' with a view to commercial printing and distribution. This will encourage indigenous literature, and could be a source of raising funds for the Training Centre.

4) The establishment of a retail outlet for books so that the profits of the bookshop could go towards subsidizing the programs at the Training Centre.

POPULAR EDUCATION AMONG WOMEN NETWORK

Puno Peru

The articles in *Voices Rising* are excellent, mostly because they address the issue of literacy, which is essential to us in Peru. In Puno, where we live, on the shore of Titicaca Lake, in a cold and dry climate, the high rate of illiteracy is one of the indicators of the isolation and discrimination suffered by women. Our population lives mostly (70%) in rural areas, and more than half are women. In the rural area the illiteracy rate is 54.4% and in the urban areas is 28.8% among women. Literacy work and training is difficult and our organization together with other organizations in Puno have created a district network for popular education among women.

All the organizations within the space of our network are advancing, contributing experiences, possibilities and a common concern in making it possible for women to participate more in the public life of the district and the region.

We need your support with documentation on literacy and perhaps with some funds that would contribute to reduce the high illiteracy rate. As well, we would like to know of events related to this problem and training possibilities for literacy educators in the Latin American language.

We will send you news of our experience in literacy and on popular education. We enclose our Constitution. We want all those related to ICAE to know about them. We are sending a copy of our declaration in support of women prisoners in South Africa.

Sonia Molina, President
Amparo Choquehuanca L., Secretary
ORMUP
Calle Deza 750, Aptdo. 477,
Puno, Peru

Our Constitution

On May 17, 1989, in Chucuyto-Puno (Peru) the Popular Education Network Among Women was created. Twenty-one delegates attended the inaugural event representing public, private, women's and women's peasant organizations in Puno.

During the debate, in which everyone participated, the most important opinions were:

- That women are always manipulated, that financial support is conditioned to electoral work; that women in rural areas always need men's support for many formal procedures because they are afraid of expressing their needs before the institutions. That there is discrimination in food support to single and young mothers. That men in the communities charge their part for the procedures, but they do not allow women to do it by themselves, and that they drink too much.
- That many women don't read or write and that priority should be given to the peasant sector because the peasant women is over exploited and marginalized, without access to education, and that no one shows concern for their training or for allowing them to know their rights.
- That to have access to assistance women must know how to read and write and the mothers' organizations operate only when there is food support.
- That we must defend our own ways, our culture, our ways of nutrition, our folklore.
- That women in the cities are in extreme poverty because prices have raised and there is not enough money for rent, food, and water and electricity services, and that we have to go out and protest in an organized way.
- That we have to develop a solidarity practice among women and that within the network there are women that can help a lot in training.

◆ That everything goes to the cities and nothing for the rural side, that there is a great deal of centralization and the red tape is cumbersome, and that in the city they spend too much money, forgetting about people in the country side. There is no work for women, they are marginalized and have no opportunities for training. The rural woman is marginalized because she does not speak Spanish and always is afraid of talking to city people.

◆ That it is necessary for women to participate more fully in the production process and in all levels of public life, and that women must be well informed.

u That many times women's participation is dependent on the leaders allowing it, who first ensure that it will be convenient for them that women know things; if there is no problem in this they will allow women's participation. The topic of political manipulation was widely discussed.

There was a discussion about the need for popular education as a positive alternative for women.

Network's Objectives

◆ To promote social change, through the practice of popular education among women.

◆ To practice solidarity, coordination and experiences and resources sharing within the network and with other groups.

◆ To contribute to women's organization, empowerment and participation in the process of transforming society.

Fields of work

◆ Communication
◆ Literacy
◆ Health Care and Nutrition
◆ Research and Resources
◆ Production
◆ Legal Training
◆ Organization
◆ Popular Culture

Methodology:

Popular education will be based in popular knowledge and will be in constant evolution according to daily life and the national situation. Popular education is a means to achieve a global transformation of society, where the different forms of exploitation and oppression will be eliminated. Popular education allows for a coordination of popular sectors.

North of Ireland

I am writing on behalf of the Centre for Research and Documentation, a community resource organisation based in West Belfast in the North of Ireland. This organisation was set up last year when a group of Irish people who had been working in third world countries and community workers came together to discuss the links between the countries we had worked in and the current situation in Ireland and also to use the experience and insights we had gained in these countries upon our return to Ireland.

We are involved in many issues here throughout the country ranging from unemployment, emigration, repression, "women's issues" etc. We resource community groups here and organise exchanges between groups north and south. We also work a lot with women's groups. I was wondering if you could put us on your mailing list and maybe send us a list of different international women's groups, particularly in Central America. I was working there three years before coming home to Ireland.

Anyway I look forward to hearing from you and if there is anything we can do from this end please do let me know. We keep a wide range of information (newspaper cuttings, articles etc.) on a variety of topics (political issues in the North and South of Ireland, discrimination, unemployment, emigration, third world, etc.) A large part of our work is organising programmes for international visitors from countries like Central America, South Africa, Vietnam, Philippines to meet with local community groups here in the North of Ireland and to share perspectives.

Mise le meas

Caitriona Ruane
Co-ordinator, Centre for Research and Documentation
89B Glen Road
Belfast, Antrim BT11
NORTH OF IRELAND

Brazil

We are a group of Brazilian Black Women working with low income Black Women in our region and we are organizing the 1st CONGRESS OF BLACK WOMEN FROM BAIXADA SANTISTA, days 11 to 14 of May, in Santos City, Sao Paulo State.

We are interested in being in touch with ICAE (Women's Program) because in Brazil the illiteracy of the Black Women is very high: about 1/2 of all the Black Women here are illiterate. We want to change this scenary and this Congress is a space for reflection and debate about this and other problems which confine Black Women to the lowest rank among the Brazilian workers.

To give us solidarity and the experience of other countries would be a great advancement for our local strategies of empowerment.

Alzira Rufino
Encontro de Mulheres Negras da Baixada Santista
c/o CEFAS
rua Vasco de Gama, 87
Santos, Sao Paulo
BRAZIL

SHARING STRATEGIES AROUND GENDER AND TRAINING

South Africa

I work for a rural development agency that is based in Natal and Kwazulu, South Africa. I am currently involved in doing participatory evaluation work with a number of our projects. My specific focus is on organisation, gender relations and women's participation.

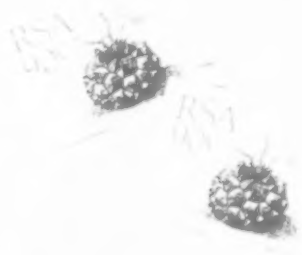
One of the ways that both fieldworkers and rural workers come to define their role in development is in a training situation. This training may be either formal (structured learning sessions) or informal (learning how to deal with daily problems). I have found that both structured and informal training sessions can play a valuable role in facilitating broader consciousness of the development context. However, I have not found many "training materials" that deal with the specific conditions facing rural women or how to struggle with patriarchal gender relations, in a colonial and capitalist context. I am interested in finding out more about those practical strategies which have worked for *Voices Rising* readers. What training materials or workshops have you developed that deal with these issues?

For instance, do you use similar training strategies when you are working with women's, men's or mixed groups? How do you facilitate and encourage women's autonomy when all the fieldworkers are men and the majority of rural groups consist of women? Given that structured training often works best over a few days or weeks in an environment away from home, how do you deal with resistant husbands? Some women won't leave home without their husbands' permission. In these cases should the educators continue working only with those women who are "allowed" to attend? What practical strategies have been devised to move from a welfare to a transformative approach? For example, how do you both respect women and challenge the traditional sexual division of labour with women whose primary interest is sewing? Is such a challenge always desirable? How do you deal with the conflict between short and long-term interests? Say, if rural women are totally dependent on remittances from migrant husbands is it appropriate to encourage an articulation of their 'anger' with men and/or husbands?

I would like to hear from any other readers who are grappling with some of these issues or have prepared training materials that are both practically feasible as well as politically challenging. I'm especially interested in materials that combine both technical and organizational "knowledge" on an integrated way.

Michelle Freedman,
AGENDA: A Journal About Women and Gender
P.O. Box 37432
Overport 4067
SOUTH AFRICA

We'd also be interested in your reflections on Michelle's questions. Let's start a discussion around these issues in the pages of *Voices Rising*. Send us copies of relevant resources, letters and articles.



India

I saw *Voices Rising* on my table when I came back to India after spending about 45 days in Italy with 120 friends from 90 countries. The bulletin not only gave us novel ideas & experiences but it is a strength and solidarity to us in our struggle with traditional Fishing Women for liberation.

I met many women of USA, Europe and Australia having concern for the situation for women in India. They encouraged me in my mission. My friends at home also share their frustrating experiences while working with the fishing women in India. Some times I am in confusion. What to do and what not to do.

Women in Indian countryside live in deprivation. We intend to organise them into cohesive groups. We help them to undertand and articulate their situations. We facilitate them to recognise the forces that oppress them. We motivate them to be organised.

When we work with education, health, and other awareness programs, people in countryside ask for food, shelter and clothes. Unfortunately, we don't have resources to meet all these. The material needs of such people could not be met permanently, unless our resources in India are genuinely distributed. People need to understand, realise this and to challenge the distributory channel.

But unforuntately the degree of deprivation is so acute that they don't have patience and power to wait for a new wave to come. They intend to have an immediate result. As a result the movement gets lost midway before it reaches the desired goal.

However we learn from our frustration. Our experience is more broad reading your report on building leadership. Hope this newsletter would be a media for us to reach with the friends, those who are also in the process of struggle for LIBERATING WOMEN.
With Solidarity,

Laxmidhar Swain,
CARD - Centre for Action Research and Documentation
L/353, Dumuduma Housing Board
P.O. Aiginia
Bhubaneswar, Orissa, 751002
INDIA

Costa Rica

We are trying to develop an educational program related to women's issues. We utilize a popular education methodology on topics such as: domestic work, working women, women in the media, abortion, battered women, women's sexuality. We would like to receive information about similar programs in other countries.

We are also providing direct services to battered women and doing community education on violence against women. If you have a brochure addressing this problem, we would like to receive it.

I have given *Voices Rising* to a woman in a small community, who shared it with other women. They thought it was very valuable and they liked the articles dealing with other women's experiences. We have to take into account the level of formal education of many women in the rural areas of Costa Rica, and the circumstances that prevent them taking full advantage of articles that are a little bit too advanced for them.

I hope we keep in touch.

Norma Jean Profitt M.
MUSADE
Mujeres Unidas en Salud y Desarrollo
Women United for Health and Development
Apartado 17, San Ramón, Alejuela
COSTA RICA

Please note that MUSADE is looking to receive materials and information about programs related to violence against women. VR

Nepal

The theme of your Quito Seminar and the main focus of latest issue of VR, "Building Leadership, Building the Movement" really needs some further discussions in the whole international arena. From my side, I also think the traditional concept of "Leadership" and "Charismatic Leader" is only enough to maintain the status-quo. We need to promote alternative concepts of leadership in order to achieve progressive transformation of world communities and societies. Thanks for your initiating the way out.

The interview with Kathy Bond-Stewart is quite worth publishing. We could know a great deal about Zimbabwian situation and the situation there. Also, the way of producing a popular text is interesting and meaningful.

This time, besides sharing the magazine to read among friends here, I made some xerox copies of the *Special Report* section and sent them to many friends working in different parts of Nepal. I have also encouraged them to write to you, especially I asked women development workers here to go through it.

From my side, I will be sending you my comments, sharing your magazine among many friends here, encouraging others to contact you, and I would also translate some relevant articles into Nepali and give them to publish in magazines here.

Bimal Phunyal
CARE-NEPAL
P.O. Box 1661
Kathmandu
NEPAL

Cuba

We think is of great value to share experiences among those of us working in popular education. For us it is very important to be included in your popular educators and activists network, because our Regional Centre in Havana, Cuba has been opening spaces in women's training in Latin America.

Presently, taking into account the social and political changes occurring in our region and women's important role both in popular struggles and organizations, we have committed ourselves to work in three main areas: Training (through three-month courses in Havana, field courses for organizations who require them and workshops on specific topics such as, women, health care, methodology for women's skill development and others); Documentation (development of a documentation centre and making links with other similar centres); Research on different women's issues.

We have done eighteen courses with the participation of more than 500 women from Latin American and Caribbean organizations. These women are grouped in a network which will allow us to follow up the training process. We are sure that the links established with you will be of mutual support.

Concepción Dumois
Director
Federación Democrática Internacional de Mujeres, Centro Regional
Regional Centre, Women's International Democratic Federation
Calle 20 Nº 117, entre 1ª y 3ª, Miramar, Ciudad de La Habana, CUBA

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Argentina

The Foundation for Study and Research about Women (FEIM) is formed by a group of professional women in different specialties. Since 1984 we have been working in women's training and mobilization in popular sectors in Argentina. We began in 1984 with the Program Women and Development in the Ministry of Health and Welfare. After the government changed in July 1989, we ceased working at the Ministry and concentrated our energies in FEIM and with other NGOs.

Our major experience has been training women as health care facilitators. Between 1985-86 we trained 500 women in Buenos Aires and the provinces of Rio Negro and Neuquen. These were 20-26 year old women who were trained in programs using a participatory methodology. Since 1988 we have been training older women (seniors) in Retiree Centres. We've had six seminars with 330 participants. These woman have more concern and possibilities of working in the field than younger women. After the training we do a follow up, focusing on their organization in groups. Seventy per cent of the women trained are working in the field.

Another aspect of our work is the promotion of women's rights and training on this subject. Between 1985-89 we organized 2-day workshops in different parts of the country focusing on women's rights (as workers, in social security, health, family, education and politics) and how to apply them in the daily life.

Mabel Bianco, President
FEIM
Foundation for Women's Studies and Research
Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer.
Vte. López 2602, p. 13 -
(1425) - Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA
Phone 802-3635

Zimbabwe

I enjoyed reading the Rising Voices. Its contents are nothing but truth. The Sistren case, is what I mentioned on the 26th August at the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau Conference. International donor agencies policies are very suppressive, as a result so much money has been spent on programs which don't meet our requirements and needs. This is an issue which the Women's Program can really voice out on our behalf. We in Africa need adult literacy and training in technical skills as mentioned in the questionnaire. Literacy and production should go hand in hand. We would like to be involved in The Women's Program as much as possible.

We will be setting up our offices on the 1st October 1989. A program has already been drawn up and we will be working in partnership with Foundation for International Training in Canada. For your information it is the only organisation which has had an ear to listen to what we want. We are very excited as our approach will be a departure from what has been going on. Maybe some of the International donor agencies will believe that we mean what we have been talking about that what they want is not what we want.

Well, I think I have said quite a mouthful.

Esinet Mapondera,
Zimbabwe Women Finance Trust
P.O. Box 8023
Causeway, Harare
ZIMBABWE

Peru

Our best regards from all of us working with women in the Amauta Association. The Amauta Association is a non-profit organization. We have been supporting popular organizations in our district, mainly those in the mining industry, mostly trade unions and the Miners Housewives Committees (Comité de Amas de Casa Mineras), which represent the miner's wife or daughters, whose experience in labour struggles is widely known. Our objective is that these organizations work not only on labour issues but that they begin to address those issues related to women's problems and women's education. Thus we are working in training and advising these organizations to allow them to broaden their space of action. Our main work is to train facilitators in health care and law. We will be sending you an article on our experience.

Rubi Paredes D.
AMAUTA
C.C. Independencia
Esq. Av. Independencia - Calle Paucarpata
Block D Of. 433
Arequipa, PERU

Thailand

Thank you for your letter and a copy of *Voices Rising*. We are glad about the work the ICAE (Women's Program) is doing. We found the *Voices Rising* bulletin to have valuable experience taken from all corners of the world.

Our organization just have 10 years old on 16 May 1989. At present we have 1600 active members from a total company head count of 2000, about 90 percent of members are female. Therefore Adult Education Programme must be necessary for our members.

We would also like to share information and gain experience from other women's groups around the world. "Welcome to Thailand" for the World Assembly of Adult Educators in January, 1990.

In Solidarity,

Prapapan Jumnakros
Signetics Workers Union
303 Changwatana Road
Bangkhen, Bangkok 10210
THAILAND

Philippines

Thank you very much for sending us a complimentary copy of the Women's Kit (see Resources Section) and Networking Bulletin of the Women's Program *(Voices Rising)*.

Your Women's Kit is very interesting and simple, so it is very appropriate reference especially for peasants level. It will be help to us in our curriculum development for women's group here in Bicol. Here in Bicol, we are also working with Amihan, a peasant women's organization working with Gabriela National; though this organization is still in the formative stage. In a country like the Philippines when militarization intensifies, it is strongly felt in the countryside. And it is the peasant sector who is greatly affected, especially their organization. We welcome why much we could sustained our linkage and information sharing. Since you are working with women sector, your experiences, materials, shared information will update and help us much in our deeper understanding with the women issue and this will help us in our training workshop with the women sector.

Lorna G. Santiago
Philippine Educational Theater Association
P.O. Box 163
Legaspi City
PHILIPPINES

"I wasn't talking . . . I was networking."

A Network Database

Many thanks to all the women who answered the "Activating the Network" questionnaire sent out with the last issue. The response was far greater than we expected! We appreciate everyone who took the time to let us know their thoughts, both supportive and critical. We will be using this information to strengthen *Voices Rising* and also to begin new initiatives to support women educators in their work.

For those of you who didn't fill in and send back the questionnaire, it's not too late. We want to hear from everybody. Don't let the limitations of the questionnaire stop you. Any comments, questions or criticisms, will be useful.

Everyone who wrote back was excited about the potential international database of women's groups and individual practitioners using popular education. Now we want to take the next step and begin to implement it. Our plan is to organize the database by geographical region and by areas of interest (popular health, literacy, workers education, indigenous, etc.). We are still working out details, so it is an ideal stage for you to have input. Would you find such a database useful? If so, do you have suggestions? Would you like to be included in the database? How can we collaborate with already existing regional and international services?

We will be linking the "practitioners database" with the bibliographical data base being developed by the Gender and Popular Education international comparative research project (see insert).

For information about the database write to Shannonbrooke Murphy at the Women's Program Toronto office.

Women and Literacy

Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme, Fall/Winter 1988 (Volume 9, Numbers 3&4).

Review by Kate Nonesuch and Evelyn Battell, literacy instructors, Malaspina College, Duncan, B.C.

We like this issue on *Women and Literacy*. It contains some 40 articles on the subject, plus reviews of films and books, and a short section of fiction and poetry. We like it for many reasons. First, simply because it is a joy to see a discussion of literacy by so many feminists, a series of articles that takes up the differences in men's and women's experiences of literacy and illiteracy. It is also good to see thinking that analyzes the social and political causes of women's oppression and its relationship to women's literacy.

Although many of the articles are theoretical, all are firmly rooted in the experience of women in Canada. Many women's stories are told in their own words: women whose men interfere with their going to school; women who are isolated from other women because of poverty, migration, religion, or socialization; women who go back to school against overwhelming odds; women who find in a literacy class the knowledge and the power to regain some control of their jobs, their families and their lives; and the particular voices of native women, immigrant women, Mennonite women and women of every colour.

We like it because it gives an idea of the range of literacy programs that operate in Canada, with an emphasis on programs that incorporate literacy learning with politicization and movements for social change.

We like it because it takes up the concerns of Canadian literacy activists. These concerns are recurring themes in many of the articles, yet each author approaches them from a slightly different point of view. Here we can only give a brief outline of some of the questions raised:

What is the matter with the Southam Report on Illiteracy? How does it divide us from each other? What are the biases in the report?

Why is literacy such a hot issue these days in government and business circles? How can we analyze the effects these two big players will have on literacy programming?

What is the matter with literacy programs that "blame the victim?" Why do some of our programs offer an individual solution to a problem that has causes in our society and our political systems? Why do we shy away from literacy work that politicizes? What can we transfer from literacy campaigns in revolutionary settings to the Canadian context?

How do we structure programs that answer women's needs in terms of content, scheduling, transportation and daycare? How do we find or create materials that honour their experience?

What is meant by "learner-centred" programming? How can a program be learner-centred if learners have little control over the program?

Questions of language, power and class come up again and again. Most literacy learners are working class and most instructors, tutors and programmers are middle class. However, most jobs available to women require a higher degree of literacy than those available to men; and most instructors and many programmers are women working in an area that requires a good education and doesn't pay very well, relatively speaking.

These are some of the questions raised in these lively articles. The answers are not always clear, but the discussions are fascinating.

One of the triumphs of *Women and Literacy* is the interplay of ideas and information among the articles by different writers. Read them in any order; come back to them and you will find your reading of a second article has taught you a new way of looking at the first. Another highlight is the excerpts of texts and illustrations from books written by women in literacy classes.

If you are a feminist; if you are a literacy worker; if you are interested in the area where these two viewpoints mesh, read this book.

Available from:
Canadian Woman Studies,
212 Founders College
York University
4700 Keele Street
Downsview, Ontario
M3J 1P3

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published by the Participatory Research Group and the ICAE Women's Program

Women Learners in English as a Second Language and literacy classes need their lives outside the classroom to be acknowledged and discussed. The material in this kit describes many everyday issues in women's lives and provides relevant and stimulating material so that women can improve their English skills while considering their real problems.

The Women's Kit is a series of eight booklets plus an introduction. Each booklet is made up of excerpts from materials written by women about their lives in Latin America, Africa, and England.

Our aim is to encourage women to engage in discussion and critical thinking about their lives–as homemakers, paid workers; and mothers.

Booklet titles are: Women's Days; Childcare; Health; Housework; Finding Paid Work; Working Conditions; Violence in the Home; and Women Working Together.

Cost: *$40.00 Institutions; $25.00 Individuals; Free to Third World women's and popular education groups.*
Available from: *the Women's Program*
394 Euclid Ave., Suite 308
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6G 2S9

SIBAMBENE: The Voices of Women at Mboza

Hanlie Griesel, text
Ellen Manqele, field assistance
Roselyn Wilson, photographs, design and layout
Ravan Press, P.O. Box 31134, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2017, South Africa.

"*Sibambene* is about experiences, and about pooled resources and learning. It is a literacy which women at Mboza have created that is of themselves.

Sibambene is a book produced with a group of women who have had no formal schooling. They live in a rural community known as Mboza where they have recently started to attend literacy classes. Through the text we learn about the realities, the uncertainties, and the hopes of three generations of women.

The fact that it is those who are literate who exercise control over texts serves to perpetuate the mystique of literacy. This book is an explicit attempt to challenge that mystique."

RING DING IN A TIGHT CORNER: Funding and Organizational Democracy in Sistren 1977-1988

by Honor Ford-Smith

The Jamaican women's popular theatre group SISTREN has been internationally acclaimed both for its performances and as a successful example of grassroots women's organization. But SISTREN (and feminist organizations elsewhere) have not managed to contribute significantly to the transformation of gender relations in society.

In *Ring Ding in a Tight Corner*, Honor Ford-Smith, former artisitc director of SISTREN, sets out to analyze the limitations of SISTREN's social impact. In her account of the group's historical and organizational development, she explores: the way international agencies' funding policies exacerbated the internal contradictions of the collective structure; the complex ways the social relations of class, race and political allegiance affected domocratic organization and management; and the external and internal conditions which limited the group's ability to respond to the needs of its members and constituency of Jamaican women.

Available from: The Women's Program, 394 Euclid Ave., Suite 308, Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M6G 2S9

Canadian Literacy Materials for Women

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is currently working on a project to develop an annotated directory of Canadian literacy materials for women. The goal is to identify and collect high quality Canadian literacy materials that respond to and reflect the varied aspirations, interests and learning needs of Canadian women literacy students.

When we first began this project, we were uncertain what we would find. We were aware, from an earlier CCLOW study, that there were very few Canadian literacy materials for women, but we also knew that some exciting new publishing efforts had been initiated, including some student writing and publishing. We wanted to explore these and other potential sources of relevant materials. As a first step, we sent out a questionnaire to women's groups, literacy groups and others involved in women's literacy education throughout Canada. The response has been overwhemingly positive, with most respondents indicating support for the project. Although many do not have materials to recommend, most indicate that they urgently need women's literacy materials for their programs.

A volunteer working group of women literacy practitioners and women experienced with literacy materials is giving leadership to the project. This group has set up criteria to determine which materials will be included in the directory, developed guidlines for selecting and assessing adult literacy materials for women in Canada, designed a book review format and set up a book review process that encourages the participation of women practitioners and learners. Book reviews are being written locally in at least three different regions of the country--by individuals, by student/tutor pairs and by small groups. Whenever possible, literacy practitioners and literacy tutors are providing an opportunity for women literacy students to be involved in this book review process. The resulting directory will be a collection of reviews reflective of the various experiences and opinions of women in different parts of the country. We look forward to receiving these reviews and to compiling the directory early in 1990.

A copy of the directory will be distributed free of charge to all those who sent in information to the project and on a cost-recovery basis to others. For information or a copy of the directory, contact:

The Literacy Materials for Women Project
CCLOW
47 Main Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M4E 3V6
Telephone (416) 699-1909

Resources

Funding Development: A Case Study From the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe

by Shirley Ross
Intermedia/NCCC, New York, N.Y., 1987, 65pp.

This insightful and practical case study examines the funding experiences of the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe (ALOZ) from 1978 to 1985. It was written to respond to the dearth of material available on fundraising, from the perspective of Third World groups. The study includes an overview of the organizational and financial histories of ALOZ, reflections from the experiences of an ALOZ Program Officer as well as general descriptions and examples of funding development techniques, placed in the context of overall project development, from needs assessment to implementation and evaluation.

Available from: Intermedia, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y., 10115, USA

Buang Basadi, Khulumani Makhosikazi, Women Speak: Conference on Women and Writing

Congress of South African Writers Transvaal Region, 1988, 62pp.

This conference organized by the Transvaal region of the Congress of South African Writers in November 1988 offered women writers and cultural workers a forum to reflect on their role in the context of the national struggle for liberation. Special emphasis was placed on examining the position and experiences of women as writers in South Africa, and the portrayal of women in South African literature. The publication includes papers and poems presented at the conference along with excerpts of the discussions. It provides stimulating and informative insights into women's participation in literature and in the cultural and political life of South Africa generally.

Available from: English Literacy Project, 314 Dunwell House, 35 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

Convergence, Special Issue on Women and Non-Formal Adult Education, Vol.11, No.4, 1988

International Council for Adult Education, 96pp.

The articles contained in this special issue focus on problems, trends and issues related to non-formal education and training programs for women in several countries and regions including Pakistan, Uganda, Canada, West Africa and Europe. The introductory article by Nelly P. Stromquist provides an overview of the development of non-formal education for women, and the sometimes negative impact programs have had on women. Stromquist explores the question of what kinds of non-formal education are needed by women, namely, those which empower women to understand their situation and undertake efforts to improve it.

Cost: Single copies: US$6, Subscriptions: $21 yearly for Africa, Asia, Latin America, $25 yearly elsewhere.
Available from: ICAE, 720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 2R4.

Economic Literacy

Excerpted From Newsletter 42, "Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives," June 1989 Of *The Tribune: A Women and Development Quarterly.*

Our lives are affected by the debt crisis, inflation, devaluations, and all of the economic crises that we hear about. But these issues are not the problem. They are symptoms or results of a larger economic system.

If we are going to work to make economic systems more responsive to people's needs, maybe we need to become "economically literate."

Economic Literacy is...

* Understanding how the economy works and its relationship to our daily lives.
* Understanding that the economy is not a neutral thing, nor is it beyond our control.
* Understanding the connection between economic power and political power.
* Understanding how changes in the economy have different impacts on women and men. The debt crisis, inflation, devaluations and all economic policies need to be explored from a women's perspective.
* Understanding how women's work in the family and in the household is an integral part of the economy and must be given economic value.
* Taking into consideration the sexual division of labour in the family, the household and the workforce.

You do not need to be an economist to educate yourself about economics and then organize training and educational sessions, public meetings and other initiatives to spread understanding of economic issues to thousands of women. In "Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives," specific training activities that you might want to use are suggested for building economic literacy.

For this issue and a listing of materials write to:
International Women's Tribune Centre 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.
Most IWTC publications are free to people from the Third World.

TRAINING FOR EMPOWERMENT

This kit is very powerful for us. The sharing of both methodologies and contexts is what makes it so significant. It is also an important tool for building South-South consciousness and the vital links we need between educators in Africa and Latin America. *Shirley Walters, Centre of Continuing and Adult Education, University of the Western Cape, South Africa*

The South-South exchange that took four Mozambican literacy workers to spend four months learning with popular educators in Nicaragua and Brazil had an important impact on literacy work in Mozambique. The four went back to work in a pilot centre for training literacy workers where their new insights and energies injected vitality and creativity to literacy staff training.

Another outcome of the trip is a kit of materials for training trainers called "Training for Empowerment." It offers a hands-on introduction to popular education through the eyes of the educators from Mozambique. It contains a ***User's Guide*** which emphasizes that it is not a training programme ready-made but a set of suggestions, to be adapted creatively to the user's context. There are ***3 Background Papers***, one reflecting on South-South exchanges as an approach to staff training, a second containing a message from Latin American popular educators to their African counterparts, and the third giving a brief overview of education in Mozambique.

The heart of the kit is made up of worksheets describing ***9 Activities and Tools*** encountered in literacy work in Latin America. The nine worksheets each include a vignette of the Nicaraguan or Brazilian group met using the activity, locating the activity firmly in its own context. There is some indication of the theoretical significance of the activity and detailed descriptions of how to use and adapt these tools and activities for the user's situation.

The final section of contains resources. These include written resources on both the theory and practice of popular education and a description of the popular education groups that the educators from Mozambique met in Nicaragua and Brazil. The kit will also be of real interest to those training frontline workers in the field of co-operative, community and labour education.

The kit is being published by the National Directorate of Adult Education in Mozambique and the International Council for Adult Education. It is available in English, Portuguese and French

Available from: International Council for Adult Education
720 Bathurst St., Ste. 500, Toronto,
Canada M5S 2R4
$15

LITERACY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

By Rachel Martin

A record of one teacher's progress toward making her classroom practice align with her goals. Thoughts on what's working, what isn't, and the questions that remain, which together provide a curriculum development tool for other literacy workers immersed in the same process.

$5.00 US (including postage)
Available from: Rachel Martin
302 Arlington Street
Watertown, MA 02172
U.S.A.

Yes!
I would like to subscribe to *Voices Rising*!

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Address: _____

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Enclosed is a cheque or money order for:

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_____$10.00 Individuals/Groups

_____Third world women's and popular education groups--free

_____I cannot send money at this time but wish to receive Voices Rising

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Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6G 2S9

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Women's Program of the International Council for Adult Education

VOLUME 4 NO. 2

VOICES RISING

A BULLETIN ABOUT WOMEN AND POPULAR EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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At the Crossroads

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A Bulletin About Women and Popular Education

October/November 1990

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Voices Rising is the central networking tool of the ICAE Women's Program, and aims to: promote the sharing of experiences, provide a forum for debate and discussion of key issues for women educators, share information on useful resources, and foster the development of a feminist practice in popular education which makes connections between broad social struggles and the personal issues and oppression women face in their daily lives.

The ICAE Women's Program links educators and organizers in different regions of the world who are working to develop education as a tool for social change and empowerment of women.

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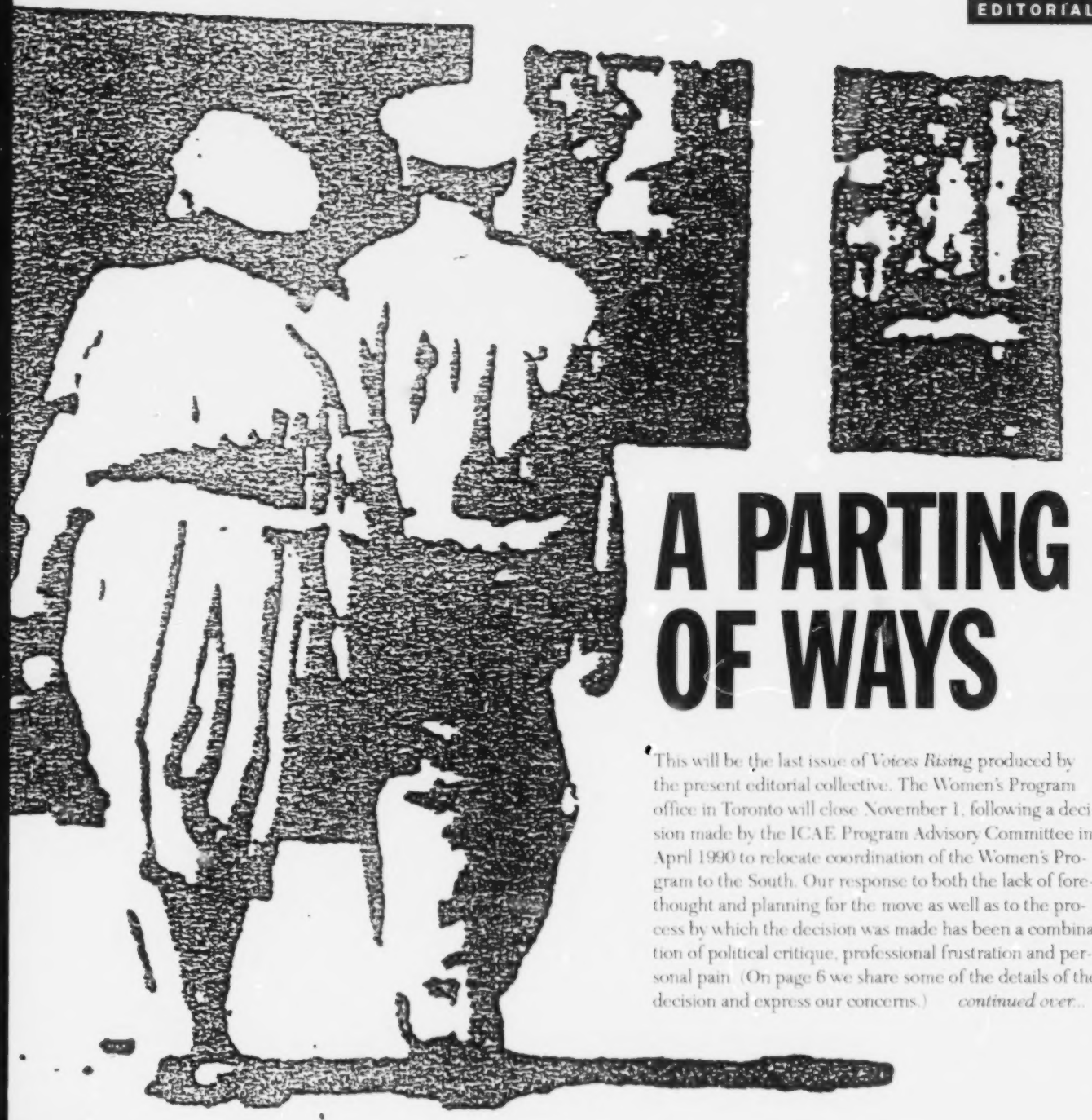

A PARTING OF WAYS

This will be the last issue of *Voices Rising* produced by the present editorial collective. The Women's Program office in Toronto will close November 1, following a decision made by the ICAE Program Advisory Committee in April 1990 to relocate coordination of the Women's Program to the South. Our response to both the lack of forethought and planning for the move as well as to the process by which the decision was made has been a combination of political critique, professional frustration and personal pain. (On page 6 we share some of the details of the decision and express our concerns.) *continued over...*

CEAAL

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EDITORIAL

We'd like to be able to tell you how the Program will be continuing and where it will be located. But the future is still unclear. There is a short term plan to maintain aspects of the Program until a new base can be found. As part of that, the next issue of *Voices Rising* will be produced by the Women's Network of the Latin American Council for Adult Education (CEAAL) in Quito, Ecuador.

At the Crossroads

The last few months since the ICAE decision have been difficult ones for the Program staff; from one day to the next we were unclear about programmatic priorities - which would be continued, which dropped, which put "on hold". At the same time we had two new time-consuming responsibilities which we hadn't anticipated. We had to prepare for a transition (without knowing the destination or content of the transition), and we had to close down an office that has been functioning for ten years. In the midst of the confusion and frustration, we were clear that we wanted to get on with producing a second 1990 issue of *Voices Rising* before finishing. We felt a responsibility to women in the network and, quite simply, we needed to intersperse the "closing" with something creative.

This issue of *Voices Rising* is a large one, and - we believe - one of our strongest yet. The articles raise a number of critical questions for women. You may remember that in the last *Voices Rising* we promised that this issue would focus on international aid and funding to women's groups. When we discovered, however, that this would be our last issue and that *Voices Rising*'s continuity and future were unclear, we decided to produce a large "farewell" issue that would touch on several key areas.

Despite the apparent diversity of issues and topics, a strong theme runs throughout. It seems that many of us feel that women activists and women's movements are at a crossroads. We've grown in numbers and vitality through the last years (so many years, including an entire UN "Decade for Women"). Women's organizations are stronger and our demands are more often acknowledged, but we are seeing that this public legitimacy can also be withdrawn. Now the context of our work is shifting. Some funding agencies are "tired of women" and other social concerns are taking centre stage. Yet we know that women's lives remain substantially unaltered. We need to creatively rethink our strategies so that we can continue to be effective in our work and in our struggles. We have come far, but there is still far to go, and the road is uncertain. Which way forward?

Our Next Steps

It's strange how international networks take form; strong relations develop among friends/sisters/comrades who never have the chance to work together on a project or organize a demonstration - and who sometimes never even meet. And yet the shared orientation towards our work for and with women allows a strong sense of solidarity and connection to develop. Before saying goodbye we also wanted to share something about us, the women you've written to and heard from through the pages of *Voices Rising*.

Ruth Lara, originally from Peru, has worked with us for the past two years as the Latin American network correspondent. Recently she has been working with a small group of other Latin American women to set up Ña Juana's Place, a service, support and networking centre for Latin American women in Toronto. Ruth is also run off her feet with the different projects of the Latin American Women's Collective, the current priority of which is preparing for the Fifth Feminist Encuentro in Argentina (November 1990).

Shannonbrooke Murphy started with the Women's Program on a temporary placement as a student helping us to sort through a backlog of publication orders.

Mujer a Mujer

For the last year she's been the mainstay of the office and network. Knowing that her Women's Program work is finishing, she's already started doing more work in community radio; she's one of the hosts of a current affairs program and is working with a planning group to develop a new feminist program which will highlight women's movements internationally. She also works day and night with a local group that supports political prisoners and indigenous struggles in Canada.

Linzi Manicom has been working with the Women's Program for five years. Although her time with the Program has always been limited, because she is also a full-time student, she's been a central member of the Program team. Linzi is South African and has many years of experience working in south-eastern Africa. She's been the staff person working with Shirley Walters on the research project and, with luck, will continue to be involved through the project's next phase.

Liza McCoy has worked with the Program and various women's projects off and on for a number of years, primarily as editor, first of the old Women's Program *Newsletter* and now with *Voices Rising*. Like Linzi, she is looking forward to spending the next months concentrating on her thesis at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Some of you may be surprised to know that there have also been two men working closely with the Women's Program. Anibal Viton has done most of our Spanish translation over the last five years. He'll continue translating with different community groups in Toronto as well as doing some writing of his own.

David Smith was our computer and financial wizard for close to six years as we made the transition from typewriters to word-processors. He is now a coordinator at the Canadian Peace Alliance.

Lynda Yanz (as always) is consumed

with details, finishing off the tail ends of our collective history. She's beginning to focus on more local and Canadian-based women's projects, and will be working more closely with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. At the same time she also wants to continue to find ways of encouraging international solidarity and action. One upcoming project is a gender and popular education training program that will link women in Mexico, US and Canada. With luck, that project will link with the Women's Program Research Project which is now focussed on training . . . the circle continues.

All of us - without question - remain committed to popular education as an important component of political organizing, to developing feminist critique and methods in popular education and to the strength of solidarity and sharing across national boundaries. We will take what we've learned through our work with the Women's Program—skills, experience and vision—to the projects and commitments we undertake.

Goodbye

Thank you to all of you whom we so casually refer to as "the network" (in reports, editorials, and funding proposals). Thank you for your contributions, suggestions, criticisms and the insights that you've shared with us and which we'll carry with us as we continue along the road ... struggling, fighting, laughing, learning, and loving ... as together we "make the road by walking".

The *Voices Rising* Collective

Lynda, Shannonbrooke, Liza, Ruth, and Linzi

WHAT IS IT ALL FOR?

At the first Women's Program international seminar in Montreal in 1987, Lean Heng (Malaysia) gave words to much of the potential that we've tried to support in our years as staff with the Program.

"I hope to find friends, to find consolation, from meeting them, to assess my work, and to relate with the people here who are also engaged in this kind of work. The stories I hear from others are very significant because they are like mirrors to my own situation. They will become a basis for me to reflect and learn how people approach the work. For me the greatest strength of a seminar like this is the feeling of not being isolated, the feeling that you are with people who are doing the same work—who are trying to be strong—who are trying to survive—who are still trying to fight back. And I really want to bring back your spirit not just for myself but for the people I work with back home."

Let's all continue to share, as Lean says, the "spirit"—not simply for ourselves but for the people, and struggles, in our home towns.

For the time being, correspondence to the Women's Program and Voices Rising *should be sent directly to the ICAE Secretariat in Toronto.*

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CANADA

EDITORIAL

Changing Coordination Base of the Women's Program

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The Program Advisory Committee of the ICAE decided at their meeting last April to look for a new Women's Program Coordinator and to move the Program to a base in the Third World within the year. As they explained the decision, the committee felt that it was "time" to have coordination of the Women's Program in the Third World, that this kind of change is consistent with current thrusts within the ICAE, that it would strengthen whatever group took on the coordination, and that location in the South would make the Women's Program more attractive to funders, who are increasingly reluctant to fund international networks, especially those based in the North.

We were stunned at the news of this decision, since we had not been informed that such a major policy and organizational change was under consideration. We do not in principle oppose moving the coordination base of the Women's Program, but we are highly critical of the process and timing by which this particular decision was made: it has undermined the strength and effectiveness of the Program in both the short and the long term.

The decision was made without consultation with the staff, leadership or constituency of the Women's Program. The Women's Program has an Advisory Committee and was in the process of formalizing the working of that body in terms of accountability to the base and input/decision making regarding program policy and project development. An immediate concern

was whether the ICAE had the right or authority to make major, far-reaching decisions on behalf of the Women's Program without consulting the Program's own Advisory Committee or staff. We had been operating with the assumption that any major decisions regarding the Program would involve various levels of the network, in consultation and close collaboration with the appropriate structures of the ICAE.

The Program had in fact begun looking at the possibility of a change of Program location and a formal discussion was planned for a Women's Program Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for March 1991. This question was seen as an integral piece of the process of attempting to ensure an international vision as well as more accountability to a quite complex "base constituency" (i.e., those of you who participate in the network in different ways). Other central aspects of the process involved the development of the Advisory Committee and the move to decentralize coordination of key projects (such as the Asia Training and International Research Projects).

Our perspective, based in part on the recommendations of the *Women's Program Organizational Review*, was that the advantages and disadvantages of such a move need to be explored in depth and with reference to other changes in the Program so that any decision would be informed by a forward-looking vision of what would be required of the new office and staff. This exploration would necessarily include discussion and input from the network constituency which the Program attempts to serve.

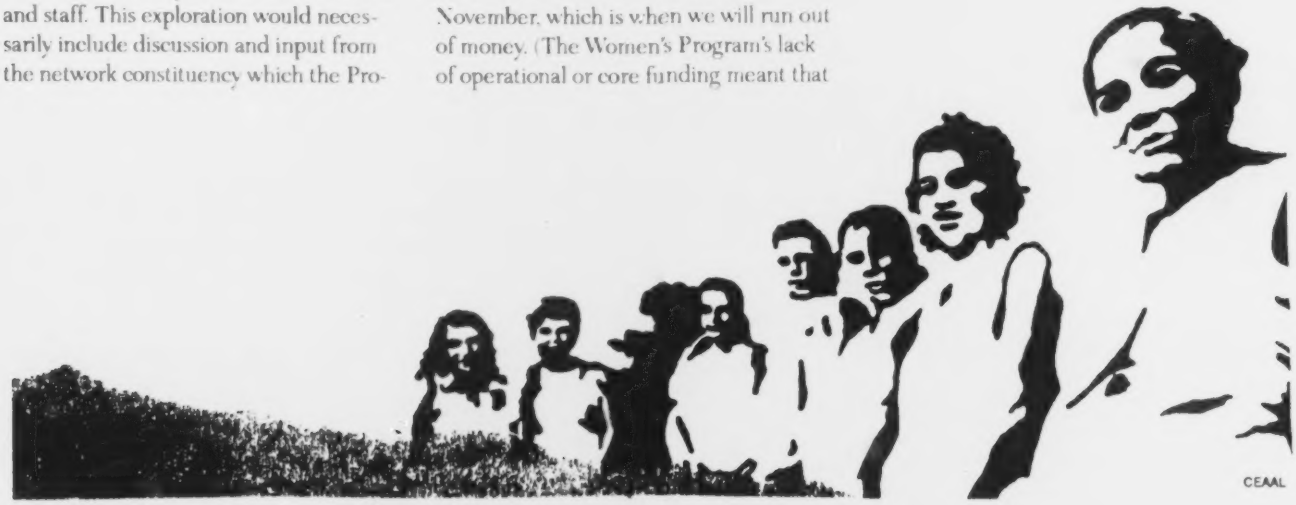
We do not share the ICAE's optimism that moving the base to the South will be overwhelmingly advantageous to the Program at this time, and we are especially doubtful about it being done in such a rush. Any transfer of a program needs to be carefully planned and funded to avoid a drastic reduction in service capacity. The *Organizational Review* recommends that if such a move appears to be generally advantageous after extensive research, then the planning and transition process should take three to five years, to ensure that the Program is strengthened rather than weakened by the move.

Which brings us to a second aspect of our response: frustration with the lack of planning behind the ICAE decision and consequent anxiety about the disruption this sudden transition will create for the Women's Program. Already, as a result of our energies being diverted to handle this new situation in the short term, we have had to put projects on hold and cut down day-to-day support activities, such as network correspondence. We have been unable to fundraise for future projects since we do not know where the program will be located and which or what kinds of projects the new base will be able to manage in the short term.

These limitations on effective fundraising have made it impossible for us to keep the Toronto office open. After much thought and budgetary analysis we have decided to close the office in November, which is when we will run out of money. (The Women's Program's lack of operational or core funding meant that we have always been dependent on presenting new project proposals to funders and so were never secure for more than a few months at a time.) Although our decision as a staff was to continue working as long as was financially feasible, the way the situation was handled by the ICAE had a demoralizing impact that undermined our commitment to the Program and at moments made November 1 seem years away.

There is no question that we continue to be anxious about the future of the Women's Program. We are concerned most about the disruption of service that will probably become even more severe when our office closes. Project work that has already been decentralized, such as the Research Project, will go on, although in a reduced form for the time being. The biggest disruptions will probably be experienced by the broader network of grassroots educators: *Voices Rising* readers, those of you who write in, those who expressed an interest in getting more involved in different activities.

In the long term we are worried about the future of the Program in a situation where issues of autonomy (vis-à-vis the ICAE) and accountability (both to the ICAE and the constituency) have not been worked through. There has been a good deal of criticism of the process, and particularly of the way a small ICAE committee seemed to feel it could make such



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a far-reaching decision without any consultation with those who would be affected by its actions. The ICAE now recognizes to some extent that a mistake was made, not least because they are seeing the effects of the lack of planning and serious consultation.

We are concerned that this same situation could arise again. There are still no formal guidelines about the relationship of the Women's Program to the ICAE; we have learned by painful experience that good faith is not enough. It is essential that terms of reference be clarified if the Women's Program is to continue to be a strong program, responding to a varied network which extends beyond ICAE national member and regional associations as its base. To what extent does the Program have autonomy to act and plan? And within that, what role does the Women's Program Advisory Committee play? How does the Program ensure that those groups who are active in the network and who aren't part of regional or member associations also have a voice within the Advisory Committee? What are the mechanisms for accountability to the ICAE? And to what body or bodies is the Program accountable—to the ICAE Executive? to the ICAE Secretariat? to the ICAE Program Advisory Committee?

The questions of autonomy and accountability have a particular history for the Women's Program in its relation to the ICAE and yet these are clearly two fundamental issues for women's movements and groups everywhere as we struggle to effect change. Certainly those of us who are leaving the Program had no pat answers. What's important is developing trust and more clarity on what the limits and potential of the relation are. The Program's autonomy and accountability to its base have been severely undermined by the decision and it is incumbent upon the ICAE to take clear steps to rectify this.

Mujer a Mujer

The Next Months

An ad hoc committee, drawn from the ICAE committee that made the decision and supplemented with members from the Women's Program Advisory Committee, met in September to determine the future location of the Women's Program. Unfortunately, there had by that time been no bids on the program from groups wanting to take on coordination. So instead of selecting a new coordinator and office base, the committee had to figure out how to keep the program operating until a coordinator could be found. This committee has established a plan to solicit proposals for coordination, is developing criteria for evaluating the proposals and making a selection, and will be overseeing the transition. It is this committee that will be responsible for the Women's Program after November 1 and until coordination is transferred to the new base. You will probably be hearing from them soon, if you haven't already; you can write to them at the ICAE Secretariat office in Toronto.

There is hard work ahead for the transition committee and for the new coordination team. All of us who are part of the network, and committed to strengthening links between women popular educators internationally, need to maintain pressure on the ICAE to work with Women's Program representatives in establishing clear structures of autonomy and accountability. The many letters sent to the ICAE protesting the decision process have been effective in showing the ICAE that the Women's Program has a strong constituency that does not want to be left out of decisions that affect them. All of our input is vital to the future strength of the Program.

JOAN CONWAY

As we went to press, we learned with shock and deep sadness of the sudden death, through illness, of Joan Conway, the Toronto-based popular educator and organizational consultant. Joan's skill and sensitivity as a facilitator, her warmth and sincerity as a colleague and sister, were widely respected and appreciated in the adult education and feminist communities in Canada and abroad.

Joan worked, through CUSO, in a number of countries. She had recently been involved in a women's training and participatory evaluation project in Zambia where she spent several weeks in August and September. The week before she died, Joan was at the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education in Cape Town, South Africa, running an exciting and successful gender and popular education workshop for community activists, part of the international research project being convened by Shirley Walters in association with the Women's Program. Joan had participated in the research seminar organized by the Women's Program in Toronto last November.

While the legacy of Joan's work is a rich and valuable one, her ongoing contribution to the development of gender-sensitive popular education and organization-building, both in Canada and internationally, will be much missed. As will she. The women with whom Joan worked so recently and intensely in Cape Town greeted the sad news of her death in a way that can inspire us all: "She gave us so much. The best way we can acknowledge her is to carry the work forward".

ACTIVATING THE NETWORK

How Do We Participate

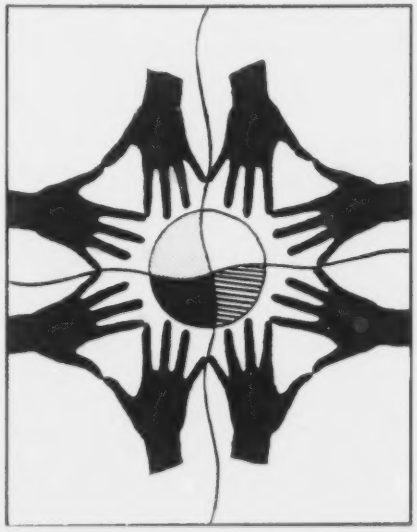
in the Women's Program International Network?

How do you become "active" in an international network? How do you add your voice to the direction of an international program, particularly when the Program office is half-way around the world and you are a small, grassroots group whose time, staff and budgetary constraints hinder participation in international meetings?

What kind of women and organizations actually benefit from an international network such as the Women's Program? How can we broaden and deepen international exchange, encouraging both inter- and intra-regional sharing of experience and analysis? How can the Women's Program improve its efforts at acting as a catalyst for international discussion about common issues and coordination of strategy?

These were some of the tough questions the Women's Program Toronto staff asked ourselves last year as we discussed how to ensure a more active involvement of our contacts in the day-to-day work of the network and in setting the Program's agenda. Obviously, we could not come up with answers in isolation, so we decided to consult the network. We had some preliminary ideas for initiatives which could strengthen our effectiveness as well as provide clearer mechanisms for group involvement.

At that time we were regularly receiving requests from new contacts wanting to



Signd Blohm

"become active" and "join" the network. Although we tried to keep in touch and respond to requests from individuals and groups, we didn't have clear mechanisms for groups to be involved, nor had we formally consulted with the entire network to see in what capacity people were willing and able to involve themselves.

So, in mid-1989 we sent out a questionnaire to discover how groups find the Women's Program useful and in what ways they might like to be more involved. Many women responded, offering constructive, practical ideas and suggestions. Responses came in from all regions, approximately proportionate to the strength of our connections in each: ie, the highest response came from Latin America, Asia, Africa and North America and the weakest from Europe, the Caribbean, the South Pacific and the Arab World.

The questionnaire dealt with several practical suggestions for strengthening the network in areas in which it is weak, and for operating more efficiently and democratically. The feedback we received helped us to elaborate priorities for the 1990-1991 Year Plan. Unfortunately, the ICAE's April decision to relocate the Program within the year has meant that many new plans have had to be put on hold until it is clear where the Program will be located, and which activities will be feasible priorities for the new team.

Although the unclarity of the Program's future makes it difficult to report on plans with precision, we are confident that the new Program team will make every effort to respond to the concerns and interests of the network. Thus we felt it would be helpful to share some assessment from the consultation.

Decentralizing the Network

We asked women whether it would be useful for them to have access to other contacts within their region or sector of work, and whether they would be willing to play a more active role in building the Program, and more specifically, in extending the network in their areas. Most said yes.

ASIA TRAINING WORKSHOP ON POPULAR EDUCATION AND ORGANIZING FOR WOMEN

Activists from Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Bangladesh attended this two-week workshop May 7 through 20. The workshop was jointly sponsored by the ICAE Women's Program and the Center for Women's Resources in the Philippines. The idea for the workshop began in October 1988 at a meeting of the ICAE Women's Program key contacts in Quito, Ecuador. The idea was to bring together grassroots organizers and activists in the region for in-depth sharing and a deepening and systematization of the different educational methods and approaches that groups are using in their work with women in different popular sectors. A report and resource manual are currently being prepared, and a number of participating groups have committed themselves to developing similar national workshops. For more information write:

Carol Anonuevo
Center for Women's Resources
2nd Floor, Mar Santos Building
43 Roces Avenue
Quezon City
PHILIPPINES

Sigrid Blohm

The process of decentralizing the networking so that many more groups feel an active involvement and ownership is crucial if the Program is to be more than a service centre. For example, the Program office can make copies of regional mailing lists available so that you can be directly in contact with others involved in popular education with women's groups. And you can help build the network by contacting and/or suggesting groups with whom we should be in touch. You who are operating in the regions can help keep the Women's Program contact list up-to-date as new organizations or projects emerge. We also encourage you to keep the Program informed of any new developments in the work you are doing. Use *Voices Rising* to inform others, and solicit suggestions and resources.

We hope that you will take the initiative to be in direct contact with the other individuals and groups listed in this issue, as well as using the Women's Program office as a reference point for communicating questions and developments in your work with the broader network.

As network contacts take on a more active role in the ongoing work of the Program, it becomes incumbent on the Program to ensure that those involved have clear mechanisms for ensuring input into the priorities and direction of the Program. Accountability and constituency involvement are never easy, and are further complicated at the international level, especially where there is no clear "membership" base. However, over the last three years the Program has been working to set up a functioning Advisory Committee of representatives from each of the regions where we have active contacts, in order to ensure a more collective and international leadership. The hope is that once this structure becomes formalized, representation from the regions on the Advisory Committee would provide an important level of accountability for your views and concerns.

Database

Respondents unanimously expressed the need for access to a database of other individuals and groups to further facilitate regional and sectoral networking. As a result, the development of a database project held a prominent role in our original work plan for 1990-91. One of our recommendations to the new staff will be that they too prioritize building the database. We will be forwarding all data in our possession and all reference files.

International Exchanges

We asked about the relevance of international exchanges (conferences, seminars, exchange visits) and for ideas on which forums would be most useful. Women seemed to be in agreement that international exchange was important, but were less clear on the most effective means. This is not surprising since while face-to-face encounters are often powerful learning experiences, they can also be frustrating when they don't measure up to our high expectations. Certainly we've learnt a lot from our efforts and mistakes. We hope *Voices Rising* will continue as a forum for critical reflection about both the possibilities and the limitations of international exchanges and seminars. If you have experience with or concrete ideas about international

exchanges—what works well and what are the pitfalls— please write and share them with the new Program office.

The ongoing International Research Project on Gender and Popular Education represents a "long-distance" form of international exchange. The concrete results of this project will be available in printed form to everyone in the network through *Voices Rising*. For more information, see page 8, and please be in touch with project coordinators if you'd like to be more actively involved.

Sharing Resources

Over the years the Women's Program has collected many publications and periodicals produced by groups in the network, and has annotated some of these in the Resources section of past issues of *Voices Rising*.

The Research Project also has as one of its components the publication of an annotated bibliography on gender and popular education. Please watch for further information in upcoming issues of *Voices Rising*.

Voices Rising

In keeping with the interests of accessibility to busy activist women and groups, we have expanded the Networking section, which consists largely of informal letters, reports, requests and dialogues: items that require less time to produce. We will encourage the new editorial group to continue to develop this section.

Many groups have indicated their willingness to be distribution contacts for *Voices Rising*. The distribution of *Voices Rising* is a logical first step in regional and local networking for the Women's Program, while at the same time providing an important resource to women educators you may come into contact with or know. Distribution within the regions could be very much more effective with the cooperation of various centres throughout the regions, who could distribute *Voices Rising* at conferences, mass meetings, etc. If you are willing and able to distribute *Voices Rising* to your network, please contact the new Program office.

Please also continue to send the new editorial group suggestions regarding accessibility of language and presentation, future subjects for discussion in *Voices Rising*, issues for more in-depth debate and regions you'd like to see covered in more detail.

Signd Blohm

If your organization has been sending us publications on an exchange basis, please delete our office from your mailing list, or replace it with the Women's Program temporary contact address, c/o the ICAE Secretariat, 720 Bathurst St., Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2R4 CANADA.

Solidarity Alerts

Favourable response to the solidarity alerts was so overwhelming that we have devoted an entire section of this issue of *Voices Rising* to solidarity updates and calls to action. Don't hesitate to contact the Women's Program for solidarity support. For further updates about the Women's Program solidarity initiatives, see the Solidarity section in this issue.

We hope that this survey was only the beginning of a continuing dialogue about the Women's Program international networking. Above all, the Program must act in your interests and respond to your needs as you yourselves identify them. It is crucial that the Program staff continue to receive regular feedback, both congratulatory and critical, so it can assess strengths and weaknesses and identify a plan of action through dialogue and understanding based on needs expressed directly from the base. It is through this kind of communication that women on staff at the Program office can both show responsible, accountable leadership and help facilitate your more active involvement in the Program.

UPDATE

Gender & Popular Education

A Research Project

The last issue of *Voices Rising* included a flyer about the International Perspectives on Gender and Popular Education Research Project. As you may recall, this project is being coordinated by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa and the Women's Program.

Response from the network has been enthusiastic. Women in many parts of the world have written expressing interest, asking to be kept informed and telling us about their own research experience. We've had letters from community-based and women's organizations which see the project as an opportunity for reflecting more analytically on the training they have been doing with grassroots women. We've had replies from graduate students doing participatory research with women's organizations in various regions who are keen to discuss their work.

The feedback confirms our assessment that the Research Project can respond to the need feminist popular educators have to look more analytically at how we take up questions of gender in our educational practice. We can already see the strength of the international and collaborative nature of the Project in providing for a valuable exchange of experiences and resources. And the comparative aspect brings a potential for sharpening our understanding of the similarities and differences in approaches and how these relate to the broader social and political contexts in which we work.

In South Africa, and particularly within CACE, the project has moved ahead with great enthusiasm! The relevance of questions of gender and popular education to the development of the popular democratic movement in the liberation struggle in South Africa is an important factor here. But so too is the strong commitment of CACE to international collaborative research around these issues.

In Bombay, India, the shelter organization SPARC has been thinking through ways of incorporating the aims of the project into its work plan. SPARC is undertaking to explore the concept of gender-sensitivity in relation to its training process with women pavement dwellers.

But progress has been uneven and at times disappointing. We have not yet managed to secure funding for the international component, so some of the centralized research support has had to be put on hold. In addition, the funding crisis experienced by the Women's Program at the end of last year meant a cut-back in staff time. As anticipated, members of the International Working Group have many other claims on their time and energies and the work of the Research Project has had to compete with these. Thus we have not kept as actively in touch with each other nor as on schedule as we had hoped we would.

Shirley Walters, the project convenor and director of CACE, spent several days of meetings in Toronto in June, working with Linzi and Lynda of the Women's Program to evaluate the Project and decide how to proceed in this next phase, particularly in light of the pending shift of the coordination of the Women's Program (see Editorial).

We decided that to simplify coordination of the Research Project, it should be centred at CACE. All correspondence in connection with the Project should be addressed to CACE. Where communication with South Africa is difficult you can write to Linzi c/o ICAE in Toronto.

"The Research Project can help feminist popular educators look more analytically at how we take up questions of gender in our educational practice."

For a collaborative project that does not have bountiful funding and which relies on the "spare" time, interest and commitment of participants, we realized that our initial research goals were too ambitious and diffuse. We decided to focus our attention and energies on just one research theme - the development of tools or training for gender analysis or gender-sensitivity in popular education. By focussing on "training", we hope to stimulate the documentation of gender-aware popular education practice in different places both for the purposes of analysis and as useful resources for educators.

It seems that for the actual research and analysis to get done, written up, translated and distributed, it is best integrated into the work programs of popular education groups or the research programs of individuals. In this way it is less of an extra task added on to one's load, and more an essential part of the work that is already underway. Of course, not all of us are in a position to organize our work around the objectives of the Research Project, even when interest is high. But we all have ideas, questions and observations about how gender (and other forms of) subordination can be tackled and how women can be empowered through a popular education process. We encourage you to share these ideas and experiences with us. Write about your work, raise issues that you've encountered, give information about materials you have worked with or know, list (and comment on) books or articles about gender and popular education from your region.

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THE RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT *for* South African Feminists & Activists

Shirley Walters,
Research Project Convenor, Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE)

The South African context has changed dramatically since February 2, 1990, when the South African State President announced the unbanning of the organizations that have made up the national liberation movement. He also announced his government's intention to enter into negotiations with all parties to create a new constitution for the country. Suddenly, organizations and people are legal, that previously we could have been jailed as "terrorists" for promoting. Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the African National Congress are seen on our television and are actively participating in the politics of the country. It is still difficult for us to believe - for many of us, throughout our entire adult lives, the government media has vilified and persecuted our organizations and leaders. As you can imagine, the situation is extremely complex and politically very fluid as various forces manoeuvre for power and influence. We realize that the white ruling bloc will not give over power; power can only be won through ongoing political organization and mobilization.

"The research project helps us address some of the urgent political education questions of our time."

Last year within the organizations of the mass democratic movement, we had begun the process of developing and refining our views on the position of women within a new democratic order and within a new South African constitution. We were particularly concerned to address the triple oppression of black, working-class women. At that time we thought that we still had several years to work on these issues. Suddenly, the possibilities for change have opened up. We need answers to our questions as matters of urgency. It is within this context that the gender and popular education research project has become even more important for us in South Africa. We recognize that to bring about any change in the patriarchal relations within our country, there will need to be changes on the economic, political, legal and cultural levels. Political mobilization which integrates race-, class- and gender-sensitive popular education practices is a crucial component in working towards this change.

Many people in several countries around the world have been in situations which may be comparable to elements of the South African experience. We believe that we should learn as much as we can from these experiences. This is why the international component of the research project is so important for us. Some examples of the questions we are addressing at present will illustrate what we mean: How have Departments of Women's Affairs or Women's Bureaux served the interests of women in various countries? What roles do or should women's organizations play in a democratic state? How important is it for

"How can we as women build our skills and confidence so that we can ensure that gender oppression is taken seriously by a new democratic South African government?"

SPEAK

organizations to retain autonomy from the state? or the ruling party?

Another set of questions which we are asking relates more specifically to popular educational strategies. What are the most effective ways of raising consciousness about gender oppression in mixed organizations of men and women? What techniques have been developed which will aid this process? How can we as women build our skills and our confidence so that we can ensure that gender oppression is taken seriously by a new democratic South African government? These are some of the many questions which we believe the research project can help us answer through collectivizing our knowledge, experiences and resources.

Program of Action Relating to Gender and Popular Education

The project is coordinated by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE). At present we have two short goals:

1. We are building a network of organizations and individuals around the country who are concerned with issues of gender and popular education. We have sent out over 200 letters and have had enthusiastic responses from a wide range of rural and urban organizations who see the potential of the project to push us all forward as we grapple with similar issues. As part of the process we are building up a contact list of people, organizations and resources to share with one another.

The resources that are being collected consist of books, articles, magazines and information on organizations in other countries. They are being stored and distributed as part of the CACE Resource Centre service. We will be distributing *Voices Rising* and other Women's Program publications. We are keen to hear of any relevant materials and activities that could assist and inspire activists locally.

2. We are developing gender-sensitive popular education practices through running a series of popular educational workshops for educators within community and workers' organizations. The first workshop was held for 30 activists in February. A second, which aims to develop a training manual on tools for gender analysis, is being planned for early October. About 25 South African women from around the country will participate. There is strong interest among women in leadership positions in many different organizations. We will be trying to build on international experiences and adapt them to the South African experience. The plan is to have two workshops with the same group with a four to six month interval.

At CACE we are taking the research project very seriously, as it helps us address some of the urgent political education questions of our time. We trust that through the Women's Program Network we will be able to share whatever we learn through our work on the ground and that we can continue to learn from others in different contexts. We see the research project as another opportunity for us to help build the national, regional and global movement of women through collectively developing a methodology for political action.

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Developing a Balance Between Introspection and Action

Organizing Urban Poor Women in India

Sheela Patel is the Director of SPARC (the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in Bombay. SPARC works with networks of urban poor in India and Asia using participatory research methodology to mobilize communities—particularly women—around issues of shelter. Sheela took the proposal for the International Research Project on Gender and Popular Education to SPARC for it to consider whether and how it might participate in the project. She wrote to us in January.

Anzetik

The title, the words and the "jargon" affected everyone negatively—since they read the notes before our discussion. However, once the whole process was elaborated, the response was gradually warmer and increasingly enthusiastic. The concept of gender-sensitivity was very exciting and stimulated a lot of discussion.

For the last two years, there has been an increasing urgency for SPARC to back up its community mobilization process with research - analyzing its working process and methods as well as developing ways to judge/assess national and international policies for development vis-à-vis the poor.

We are now at a painful and awkward stage - struggling to develop a balance between research and introspection and action and organizing. We also find ourselves now in a position to lobby for policy changes.

This makes it urgent to have "in house" expertise to assess the implications of policy demands we are making in general and with regards to women specifically.

However, while conceptually this kind of additional task is acceptable, in actual terms it is very hard to "add on" to the repertoire of an organization whose "engine" runs on action.

Therefore the challenge lies in creating and locating space within SPARC's scope of work which makes this yet another strength rather than burden. Creating the workable linkage seems to be the true challenge. To do this we all felt that we should start off by locating in this research a starting point which will be of value to the organization - and from there to move to more abstract and complex areas.

Like all activist organizations, we "do" faster than we "write". Since the audience who will "read" is not our primary audience, the chances are that we will never prepare a comprehensive document unless we make a commitment to do so. So we all saw this research process as our opportunity to document what we do and then analyze the contents, exchange ideas and processes while learning how macro policies link up and in turn affect what we do and undertake.

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"We are now at a painful and awkward stage — struggling to develop a balance between research and introspection and action and organizing."

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WOMEN, LITERACY & EDUCATION IN AFRICA *an international exchange*

FEBRUARY 3-18, 1990

● BY JANE GURR

Sheba Lakdawala records a group discussion.

Jane Gurr

IN FEBRUARY 1990 TEN WOMEN literacy and health workers attended a three week exchange in Mali and Tanzania organized by the Women's Program and the Women's Network of AALAE (African Association for Literacy and Adult Education). The aim was to strengthen and promote non-formal education as a tool for social change and the empowerment of women.

The idea of an exchange came from individuals and groups in the network of the Women's Program. In a number of forums over the last few years women in the network called for "deeper" learning experiences, ones which would allow them to observe and share their experiences with women doing similar work in different parts of the world. Literacy and health were chosen as themes in order to focus the content of the exchange. Mali and Tanzania were chosen as sites for the exchange with the aim to strengthen the international network of women educators and especially the participation of African and French-speaking women.

The participants were selected from the Women's Program Network and are working with literacy and health education programs with women, in a variety of capacities (see list on page 19). Each woman brought with her a wealth of experience working for women's empowerment along with commitments to numerous organizations and networks involved in women's development. We were hosted by the DNAFLA (Département national d'alphabetisation fonctionelle linguistique appliqué) in Mali and by the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA). During the 16 days spent together we met with women

educators, organizers and learners in two urban centres, Bamako (Mali) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), and in villages surrounding the two cities.

The projects and programs visited were wide-ranging and not restricted to health and literacy although these were a central focus. We saw literacy and traditional midwifery training for rural women, a variety of women's cooperatives, a rural health centre, working conditions in a shoe factory employing mainly women, and community animation projects in rural areas which used alternative communications such as theatre and song.

Mali

In Mali the military government largely controls development efforts, in association with international agencies such as UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNDP and other smaller but foreign NGO's. The people of Mali are struggling for basic survival against drought, desertification, severe food shortages, and poor economic conditions. These factors, when combined with strong Islamic tradition, may explain why projects aimed at women's development are focussed primarily on satisfying basic needs, but don't address the structural inequality between men and women. We also observed that much of the burden of work toward development is carried out by women. Where steps forward are being taken in terms of literacy, food production, nutrition, hygiene and other health issues, it is the women who are leading the efforts. As Linda Gagnon from Québec expressed it, "women are constantly being motivated to do more, but there is no consideration or criticism of the role of men."

A highlight of the time spent in Mali was a three-day period spent in rural areas, Ouelessebougou and Bla, where we were hosted by the Centre de formation des animatrices rurales, under the leadership of Halimatou Traore. Here Halimatou and the other staff shared with us their efforts to provide training in literacy, midwifery, animal husbandry and co-op development for women from surrounding villages. We learned that with literacy skills the women are able to keep much needed health records (births, deaths, illnesses) for their village and to organize and run cooperatives more effectively. In fact, the literacy skills gained were only lasting when directly linked to an activity or responsibility which was ongoing in women's lives. For them, literacy for it's own sake doesn't make sense.

"This experience has enlarged my vision of the Third World. It has expanded my perspective and understanding of women in Africa and has worked to build international solidarity among women."

Marie Lesort (Mexico)

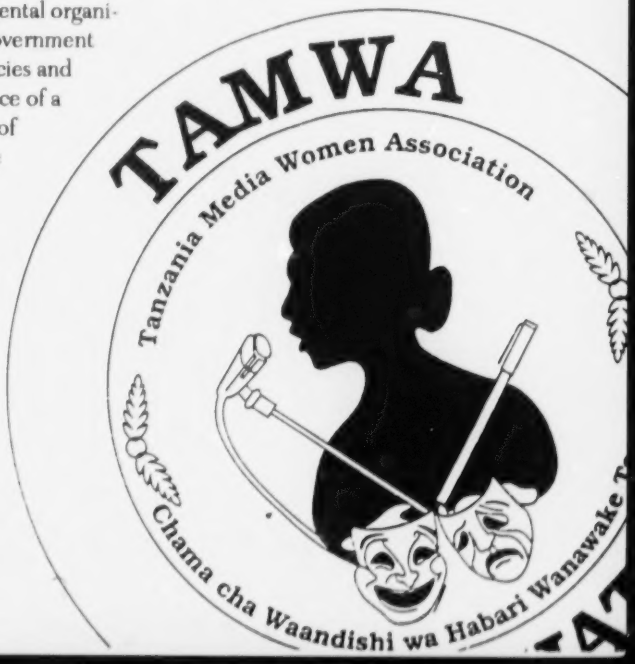
Tanzania

Although women in Tanzania and Mali confront many similar difficulties in their daily lives—the searches for water and fuel, the overburden of work and the struggle against health problems and diseases—the contexts are very different. The government in Tanzania is officially socialist and greater potential exists for the development of non-governmental organizations which are critical of government and foreign development policies and programs. We also saw evidence of a growing women's movement, of which our hosts, TAMWA, are an integral part.

TAMWA began doing educational work two years ago around the portrayal of women in the media in Tanzania. Since then their role and base in Tanzanian society have greatly expanded. TAMWA's main focus is still communications and through this they are playing a very visible and strong advocacy role for the rights of women in Tanzanian society. TAMWA also works with women in small rural communities, helping to organize women for health and cooperative projects.

The exchange group visited three communities in which TAMWA has been active: Saleni, Msoga and Lugoba villages. Here the participants spent time talking with village women about their lives and concerns, and shared practical information about their own contexts and work with women. Although they came from very diverse contexts, the village women and the exchange participants identified many shared issues and problems. We were told that for the village women, the presence of women from different countries and the realization that women from all over the world experience similar problems created an important and validating experience which would assist them in their efforts to mobilize the community.

TAMWA works with popular theatre methods in rural areas. We saw the power of popular theatre in a session which raised issues faced by women in traditional polygamous marriages. The process involved a theatre presentation followed by the active participation of everyone present. The feelings of wives in relation to their husbands and one another and the attitudes of men in polygamous marriages were brought out. The audience members got involved by presenting their



"This experience is valuable to me because it allows me to see myself and my work with new perspectives, through what I am learning from others."

Faten Abdel-Moneim (Egypt)

points of view and ideas for dealing with the situation. The process allowed the group to cut directly to issues and provided a framework for collectively considering solutions.

The Exchange Experience

Exchanges can be deeply enriching learning experiences, allowing participants to see how others are working, and to reflect on their own projects at home. These can also be important moments for building global awareness of women's struggles and international solidarity. It is, however, not enough just to bring women from different contexts together. An exchange is a complex process that needs to be organized thoughtfully. Some of the questions and problems we grappled with were: How to set the stage for open and in-depth discussion to take place between women who have come from different cultural and work contexts, with different perspectives and in some cases who don't share the same language? How to move the process of exchange beyond the level of introduction and description to discussion of concrete issues and strategies?

In planning the exchange we recognized that the participants would need time to adjust to their new surroundings, to meet and get to know one another, and to gain an overall perspective on the society and situation of women in each country. We also wanted to establish the programmatic and organizational context within which the exchange was organized, which we hoped would lead to concrete results emerging from the exchange. The group devoted the first two days they were together to an orientation, covering many of these basic issues.

What became clear once we began meeting with village women in Mali was that the two-day orientation had not been sufficient to provide the kind of in-depth briefing that participants needed. A deeper understanding of the economic, social and cultural dynamics affecting the situation of women in the two countries was necessary if participants were to make comparisons with their own work and to discuss concrete issues and strategies. We realized that more time should have been spent on briefings throughout the three weeks and that participants needed even more time to share among themselves. All of this was further complicated by the fact that we were working in four languages. While the interpretation process worked reasonably well, it slowed communication considerably.

The shared experiences of women internationally was a strong theme throughout the exchange. The participants agreed that it would be essential to use the experience as a channel for reflection and analysis, especially with the grassroots women they work with, and then to share and distribute the ideas generated through their networks. Efforts would also be made to encourage local organizations to link with the groups they met in Mali and Tanzania.

The exchange contributed to the strengthening of local, regional and international networks of women educators. At a local level, for example, it was clear that TAMWA had used the opportunity of the exchange to mobilize the community and develop links with other organizations which would carry on into the future. For the Women's Program, the participation of African women and French and Arabic-speaking women marked an important moment in increasing the participation of women from those regions in the international network of women educators. We in the Women's Program learned a lot from this first experience. We are left with the conclusion that despite the complexities of language interpretation and the need for more time, that the time we did have for reflection, challenge and sharing of experiences, will make a concrete contribution in strengthening the work of women educators for social change and the empowerment of women.

Despite a lack of sufficient time for orientation, in-depth discussion did happen between participants and hosts. One such discussion centred on village traditions and what they mean in terms of the power of women to make decisions in their communities. Here Cisse Moussokoro and Lalla Ben-Barka, both from Mali, are sharing perspectives with the participants.

LALLA: When we go to the village tomorrow you will see that in order to have access to the women in the community we will have to first greet the chief of the village who will give us permission to meet the women and their leaders. This was something that we had to learn when we began doing literacy work with the women in rural areas. Once we have access to the women we are able to work with them without interference from traditional leaders. The women are also free to tell you if they want to work with you. We have learned that it's necessary to respect the traditional norms.

CISSE: It's not a question that women don't have power. People who come here often feel that women aren't consulted, that they don't have power to make decisions, while the situation is exactly the opposite. Traditionally women are consulted on all village decisions, especially the first wives. Each man consults his wife before going to the village council gatherings. When the men have difficulty coming to a decision, they will stop the meeting and go to consult the women further. More often than not, the decision made in the end conforms to what the women want.

SHEBA: But the women still don't attend the meeting. What does that show? Is that not a status issue?

CISSE: It isn't a problem. There is a Bambara saying, that behind every man's cap there is a woman's braid.

SHEBA: Yes, that's the tradition all over the world. Behind every man there is a successful woman, but always behind.

LINDA: What concerns us is that when women have informal power there is always the risk that they can lose it at any time.

LALLA: Is it only when somebody is sitting in a circle as part of a grouping that their power becomes formal, recognized and accepted? Or is it because she is behind her husband and everyone knows she is playing from there that it is recognized and accepted and given importance? It's not because something is institutionalized and formal in the sense that you understand it that it's solid. What we understand as informal power is powerful because here there is all the weight of tradition supporting it, guaranteeing the place of that power.

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World Assembly of

Adult Educators

Bangkok, Thailand

January 8-18 '90

A CRITICAL MOMENT *for* Women Educators

● BY LYNDA YANZ

CLOSE TO SIX HUNDRED ADULT educators from around the world came to Bangkok in early January to attend the fourth World Assembly of the ICAE. The theme was "Literacy, Popular Education and Democracy: Building the Movement." The aim was to "strengthen adult education networks, organizations and programs internationally so that adult education might more effectively contribute to broader movements for peace, social justice and equality."

The ICAE Women's Program made the Bangkok meeting a priority in 1989, which meant that we spent hundreds of hours fundraising to support the twenty delegates we financed, advocating for strong women's representation from other networks, working with key contacts in Asia and on our Advisory Committee to establish a plan and priorities, contributing to the overall program planning, preparing volumes of materials, and consulting and coordinating to ensure that our contacts arrived safe, sound and well-briefed. Despite our skepticism about the value of large international meetings, we felt that the Assembly warranted this effort because it offered an occasion for women and gender issues to be addressed in a central way by adult educators. However, as is often the case, increasing women's visibility in terms of numbers and level of participation does not automatically result in significant change in organizational structures, either formal or informal.

In the case of the adult education movement, the critique leveled against the ICAE in a 1986 evaluation still largely holds true: "It would appear that the structure of the adult education movement still remains firmly in the control of men. That is, men occupy a disproportionate number of positions on boards or executive committees and as secretaries-general or executive directors of ICAE's member associations at all levels. Men tend to be the fund-raisers and power brokers of the movement." (Ted Jackson)

That reality provides both the challenge and context for our work as activists for women within the ICAE and adult education movement. Certainly it shaped our work and experience at the World Assembly.

What we set out to do

We wanted to ensure that women and gender issues were visible throughout the Assembly. We wanted to support the emerging leadership of women educators and activists representing local popular education and women's groups, many of whom are only just beginning to become active at the international level. We knew that a strong presence of women educators actively involved in work with women and who raise gender issues would ensure that all participants - women and men - engaged in an educational process, even though at times the "sensitivity" of the issues that came up made them difficult for some, particularly male colleagues, to address.

We wanted women at the World Assembly to have plenty of opportunities to make contact and learn from one another. In the process, we hoped to strengthen the growing international network of women educators and the work-

ing links within and between regions. We also knew it would be particularly important to make special efforts to learn about the work and context of women in Thailand and, if possible, to use our presence in Bangkok to lend concrete support to women's efforts and struggles there. Too often international meetings, even of so-called popular educators, neglect the opportunity to connect with and make a constructive contribution to local peoples' organizations and movements.

"Increasing women's visibility in terms of numbers and level of participation does not automatically result in significant change in organizational structures, either formal or informal."

We wanted to draw attention to the under-representation of women in ICAE member associations and program networks. For example, despite the fact that the ICAE has a Task Force on the Participation of Women in the ICAE, the overall gender balance of nominations to the executive from regions and member associations was very disappointing. Even though all women nominees were elected, the number of women on the ICAE Executive declined from its already embarrassingly low level.

We wanted to consult with those interested in becoming active in the Women's Program and network in order to establish priorities for the coming years as well as strengthen our links with groups in regions where we've been relatively weak.

Our week's work

It's not surprising that the attempt to accomplish all of this stretched the capacities of the team of new and old acquaintances, comrades and colleagues that coalesced as a working group for the week, pulling us in many different directions. Challenging the sexist ideas and practices that are still present sometimes worked against our efforts to participate as equals - and effectively created a "double workload" for women at the Assembly.

It goes without saying that those of us who were involved in the various aspects of our "women's contingent" also participated in the full roster of solidarity visits, plenaries, theme and skill workshops, and social events. But like many other participants who arrived with multiple agendas, we also were involved in a host of other activities. We facilitated workshops, organized meetings and more meetings, distributed publications, and tried to support new connections and learning between as many interested participants as we could humanly manage.

We maintained a women's networking room where participants could set up displays, hold impromptu meetings, or just take a break and meet friends. Over 100 women attended a welcoming meeting on the first evening where we decided to operate as a caucus to monitor and ensure that women and women's issues were not neglected. We also decided to carry out a modest popular education campaign around women's issues during the course of the Assembly. Each night a different team met to rack their brains for an appropriate slogan, which they painstakingly wrote out on small cards to have ready on the cafeteria tables when participants arrived for breakfast. The idea was to engage everyone in a discussion of what it means for a movement to take seriously its professed commitment to women and gender issues.

A concern raised at that first meeting was whether some participants were supporting the sex tourism industry that is so extensive in Bangkok, and if so, what should be the response of our women's caucus and the official structures of the Assembly. We were there after all as the embodiment of the "international adult education movement." Was it acceptable to talk about equality, justice and social change during the day and then in the evenings to "buy" Thai women from the brothels that line Bangkok streets?

PARTICIPANTS SAID

"I came back completely affirmed, convinced of the need for women to have access to each other's work internationally, both to see and confront the systems which oppress us locally but which can only be understood and confronted internationally —such as the trafficking in women, the free trade zones . . . and to take courage for the daring steps we are all taking in confronting gender domination in its most intimate expressions within each of our cultures.

"I am also convinced of 'popular education' as a meeting ground. Although it happened only rarely in Bangkok, I became aware there of the kind of spaces we need - spaces in which to reflect on how we conceive our struggles, where they are embedded, what forms they take, what they touch on.

"It was also exciting to be in the company of women firmly rooting the gender struggle in the complexity of popular struggles, making clear the gender content of every struggle and the class, cultural and international nature of the gender struggle."

Elaine Burns,
Mujer a Mujer, Mexico

"I would like first to express how important and interesting it was for me to have participated in this assembly because of the richness of its theme and participants. It will have a great impact on us Tunisians because our work in the area of adult literacy is very weak.

"I want to mention the quality of the organizing done by the ICAE staff and Thai friends. But above all I want to emphasize the efficiency and the efforts of the activists of the Women's Program, despite their small number and the difficulties that they face.

"The level of intervention and debate was highly enriching and allowed activists from different regions and different areas of struggle to exchange their points of view and experiences. These exchanges allowed us to discover points of similarity despite geographic, economic and cultural differences, especially in the case of women. And this led us to the necessity of acting together to develop common or similar programs

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PARTICIPANTS SAID

(continued from page 21)

and to strengthen our solidarity. It was important thus to strengthen the already existing networks and to create new ones.

"The unprogrammed activities were also very important. I mention in particular the evening of support for Thai women and the consciousness-raising work that followed.

"I could go on listing positive points but that would take too long when it is important to mention negative points.

• The weak representation of women on the ICAE executive (despite the large number of rank and file women) which was maintained after the last election.

• Certain members of the regional networks are officials, that is to say, working in governments, and knowing the nature of governments in the developing countries, I have my doubts about the popularity of the programs that are carried out.

• The solidarity visits did not allow the establishment of true solidarity links because they were very official and the language barrier prevented direct contact with the presenters, which we would need in order to get a clear idea about the aspirations of the people and the real problems faced by activists in their adult education programs.

"On the personal level, the Bangkok assembly:

• allowed me to establish links with activists in different areas (health, literacy, popular education, handicaps) that interest me;

• brought me closer to the Arab women and especially to the Palestinian women whom one meets so rarely;

• allowed me to establish links with women from all the continents and to share their experiences and even to envisage long term efforts. I mention the example of the struggle against fundamentalism waged by the Arab women and the Pakistani women who live a reality harder than that of certain other Arab countries.

"But I feel that I was at times a little 'out of it' because my limited knowledge of English restricted my contacts with many of the participants whom I would have liked to know better. It's too bad that the documents you sent me are in

(continued next page)

Erma Stultz

Women participants didn't have one point of view, yet everyone agreed that the issue was serious and couldn't be left publicly unaddressed, which is so often what happens with issues that uncomfortably straddle political and so-called "private" domains. We returned to the discussion of what would be appropriate and responsible action, meeting in various formal and informal gatherings, some of which included representatives from Thai women's groups. The final result was a call to action (see Solidarity section) which was passed unanimously by conference participants in the closing plenary.

Promoting the Visibility of Women and Gender

Women represented about one third of the 436 registered participants. Although numbers are not a clear indication that women's interests or gender issues will be priorities, this percentage represented an important step. It seems that member associations and networks/programs are taking the need for stronger women's representation more seriously.

The "women's contingent" was quite noticeably organized and consistently visible throughout the Assembly. The networking room, the public forum on the Thai Women's Movement and other organized "spaces" contributed to this. Perhaps most important was the way in which women educators and activists "bonded" in the conference atmosphere, in a way that has come to seem natural and inevitable. We sought each other out to share and compare what we were doing but also, importantly, to make a place within the broader setting of the adult education meeting where we felt comfortable and validated. For according to many women, the World Assembly remains characterized by a masculinist style of work and the vestiges of male power-broking from which women tend to feel excluded.

Extending the Network and Building the Program

Perhaps the most important outcome was the contacts made with both women and men participants at the Assembly. Many of the strongest working relations, which no doubt will continue into the future, were those that developed out of the caucusing and strategizing that took place in confronting the issue of sex tourism. A myriad of discussions took place that we hope have laid the basis for ongoing contact and perhaps the possibilities for working links. We made many new friends through the Assembly, especially among the large and strong contingent of women from South Asia who attended primarily through other networks; we also made new friends from the Arab region. Important steps were taken to strengthen regional networks in the areas where these have been weak or non-existent (North America, Arab region, among Francophones, in South Asia and between Asian regions). The participation of two representatives from CAFRA (Caribbean

"Challenging the sexist ideas and practices that are still present sometimes worked against our efforts to participate as equals — and effectively created a 'double workload' for women at the Assembly."

Association for Feminist Research and Action) furthered their involvement in the Women's Program, and thus strengthened the Program's links with feminist popular education in the Caribbean.

Supporting the Struggles of Women in Thailand

It's difficult to assess the extent to which we were able concretely to support the struggles of women in Thailand. Certainly we learned a tremendous amount about the issues women face and the excellent work being carried out by NGOs, often under very difficult circumstances. Links were made between women in various parts of the network and women in Thailand, through exchange visits and then through a public forum on the Thai women's movement. One concrete gesture of solidarity was the Call to Action mentioned earlier, which calls on the adult education movement to protest the location of the March 1990 governmental "Education for All by the Year 2000" conference scheduled to be held in plush quarters very close to a beach frequented by sex tourists. While Thai women felt that there was little possibility that any protest would result in an actual site change, they nevertheless felt it important for the international community to draw attention to this matter with a strong and public voice.

The Representation of Women and Shifting Gender Relations in the ICAE

In spite of the fact that women represented 30% of participants at the Assembly and were the most vocal and organized single constituency in Bangkok, the situation of women in leadership within the ICAE and the adult education movement is not good. If we look at the ICAE as an organization, we see nine women on the ICAE executive, out of a total of thirty-three voting members. The picture gets worse if we look at the power structure within the Executive: the President, Treasurer and Secretary-General are men; all but two of the ten Vice-Presidents are men, and all four regional Secretaries-General are men. The pattern which Ted Jackson referred to (quoted earlier) still holds true. The leadership of the adult education movement, if the ICAE is any indication, remains in the hands of men. The implications of this are felt in different ways in formal and informal situations, and on more or less consequential matters.

This reality makes the role of the Task Force, which the ICAE set up in January 1989 at the initiative of the Women's Program, all the more crucial. Until now, the Task Force has functioned more on paper than in reality, with almost no funds allocated to its operation. The Executive in Bangkok approved a request that the Task Force's term be extended to four years. The current plan, as presented by the past Task Force Chair and present ICAE President Francisco Vio Grossi, concentrates on research and education. However, the question in many women's minds at the World Assembly was what actions could be taken to ensure that the leadership of the ICAE is more representative of the women adult educators who are so actively involved in the adult education movement.

Augmentation of the number of women representatives in the ICAE's structures and meetings is critical but obviously should not be seen as the only strategy to bring about shifts in gender

PARTICIPANTS SAID

(continued from facing page)

English because it is not easy for me to get them translated, especially as I must pass them on to other people. But I understand your situation and thank you for all your efforts toward making the Women's Program succeed and meet its goals."

Bakhta Jmour,
Women's Commission
Union générale des travailleurs tunisiens (General Union of Tunisian Workers)

Bakhta is a French/Arabic speaker. She is a member of the health workers union affiliated to the General Union of Tunisian Workers. Among many other priorities, Bakhta has worked to raise gender consciousness in the Union through her work in the Women's Commission.

The Women's Program has attempted to operate in English, Spanish and French. This has been difficult, especially due to budget limitations. We believe that finding creative ways to cross language barriers remains one of the key challenges in international work. We are self-critical of our limitations, especially in integrating Francophone activists into the network. Bahkta's statement is an indication of the force and commitment that our francophone colleagues have had to exert in order to work with us.

"'Let me introduce you to our next speaker, a lovely lady.....isn't she beautiful.....give her a hand, ladies and gentlemen!!'

"Men and women applaud. Some women boo and heckle. Some women find the heckling disturbing. Some women quietly shake their heads in dismay. Some women are not perturbed. Some women applaud the compliment. And the men? - I'm so chauvinist that I did not even observe their responses! Can a woman be chauvinist?

"How does one place gender issues on the agenda at a conference? Some of the challenges are:

• How do we register our objections in such a way that we do not antagonize and alienate women and men who do not understand the nature of the issues?

(continued on page 25)

relations. Attention also has to be paid to raising the level of gender sensitivity within the adult education movement generally. This involves the creation of an atmosphere conducive to a constructive and collaborative discussion of gender issues. It involves the development of a style of work and social interaction that does not alienate, silence or marginalize women. It entails, among other things, relinquishing the power that derives from the established male networks and communication patterns.

When the Women's Program proposed to the ICAE that it set up a task force, the objective was to develop policy on a whole range of concerns that include sexual harassment, integrating gender within all aspects of adult education, and breaking the patterns that continue to limit women from taking on leadership roles in organizational situations; three years later, that challenge remains and so does the question: what is the ICAE's commitment to integrating a feminist vision and women's leadership?

Sigrid Blohm

"According to many women, the World Assembly remains characterized by a masculinist style of work and the vestiges of male power-broking from which women tend to feel excluded."

International Meetings – Was this one worth the effort and money?

The cost of organizing international meetings is high. The total cost to the Women's Program was $86,000 to finance the participation of twenty women, in addition to the countless hours of labour by Women's Program staff and friends from Asia who worked hard as regional and local coordinators. If we view participation in the World Assembly only in terms of professional development for the women involved, the cost is too high. It is clear, however, that the impact of the experience can reach beyond the participants to affect the constituencies they represent. Conferences like Bangkok need to be seen as part of a process, important only in how we, as individuals and representatives of groups and networks, find ways to use what we gain to improve our movements and organizations, developing new capacities for transformation and empowerment.

Bangkok was a gathering of the whole range of educators that make up the adult education movement. The Women's Program has been working since the World Assembly in Paris (1982) to strengthen the position of women in this movement, primarily through the development of links, solidarity and discussion among women but also through advocacy and education within the broader movement. With each Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1985 and Bangkok, 1990), women have shown increased strength. There is no doubt that the presence and work carried out in Bangkok had a significant and positive impact on the movement - its terms of reference, its forms of practice and the level of consciousness around gender issues. We believe that this process will continue as long as women continue to organize themselves and push, patiently and at times more aggressively, to find new ways of integrating feminist practice and perspectives.

As far as the Program itself is concerned, the Assembly represented the culmination of a process of consultation and consolidation that had been underway for the two previous years. We returned better able to put ideas and projects into a Year Plan of Activities, which included further decentralization of program area coordination, increased support to emerging networks, and several new publication initiatives, including steps to increase the involvement of network members in the planning, production and distribution of *Voices Rising*. A sub-committee of the Program's Advisory Committee developed a proposal and plan for working toward the next meeting of the Advisory Committee, tentatively scheduled for March 1991, where representatives from the regions would make decisions about Program structure and priorities for the coming years.

Unfortunately, the ICAE's April action to "take charge" by making decisions on the Program's behalf (see Editorial) has derailed both the Program's activities and the development of a more democratic and accountable structure. The Program has great potential - a rich base of strong contacts and past work - but serious organizational limits on process and autonomy. Its continued strength will depend on the hard work, creativity and tenacity of those women who continue to see the Program as a potential ally and priority for their work.

PARTICIPANTS SAID

(continued from page 23)

• How do we raise awareness among women and men about gender issues which emerge during the course of a conference?
• How do we create a space within a conference for gender issues to be placed on the agenda?
• How do we address gender issues if legitimate space is denied and the issues suppressed?

The Women's Program of the ICAE played a crucial role at the conference on "Literacy, Popular Education and Democracy" held in Bangkok earlier this year in placing gender issues on the agenda of the conference by:
• providing a forum for women to discuss and address gender issues which emerged during the conference;
• by convening a very successful panel discussion of Thai women who spoke of the oppression of women in Thai society in general and the exploitation of Thai women, particularly in the prostitution trade;
• by organizing a low-key campaign using slogans written on conference name tags, which enabled women participants to register their objections to gender insensitivity.

One of the most crucial tasks currently facing gender-sensitive popular educators is the development of popular education skills and the design of programs which enable us to challenge gender oppression in any educational forum, non-governmental organization, trade union, or health centre!

Zelda Groener,
Centre for Adult and Continuing Education - University of the Western Cape

Zelda is a lecturer with CACE at UWC, working to develop both People's Education and gender-sensitive popular education practice. Zelda is also working on the South African component of the Gender and Popular Education International Comparative Research Project.

Guatemala - NACLA

Fighting Repression, Building Democracy

THE FEMINIST CHALLENGE TO POPULAR MOVEMENTS

Excerpts from a Pre-Workshop Discussion

● EDITED BY SHANNONBROOKE MURPHY

At the World Assembly in Bangkok, the Women's Program organized a workshop on "Strategies for Popular Education under Conditions of Repression." In preparation, four of us met to decide how best to tackle this complex issue.

As Mary Habib, from the Association Najdeh in Lebanon, Zelda Groener, from the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education in South Africa, and Bess Angosta, from the Women's Studies and Resource Centre in the Philippines spoke, they formulated a set of urgent common questions:

• What are the challenges to popular education under conditions of repression?
• What is the role of popular education in re-building organizations and strengthening their democratic process under conditions of repression?
• How can popular education continue to be used to maintain accountability and strengthen participation and democracy in a post-repression or post-liberation society?

More strongly than a common strategic outline, these questions, challenges and frustrations emerged as a crucial base from which to understand, analyze and strengthen educational practice within liberation struggles. There was a reaffirmation of the crucial role of popular edu-

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cation in demanding accountability and democracy within liberation movements, even under repressive conditions. In the context of the struggle for democracy, an urgent concern for the integration - rather than abandonment - of a gender perspective was emphasized.

We wanted to share a small segment of our discussion to provoke your thoughts and reflections.

Shannonbrooke: What are some common strategies that have emerged in developing popular education under conditions of repression?

Mary: Democracy - building committees and working on the grassroots level, for example.

Zelda: A gender perspective. Although democracy and gender issues in popular education under repression haven't really been seriously addressed yet.

Mary: There's an even more comprehensive question, as far as Palestinian women are concerned: gender issues in the national struggle itself. We, as Arab women, have not yet found the answer to that larger question. I'm sure other women also have the same experience. How do you tie feminism with the national struggle?

This is a big challenge to us women in the Third World. It's the biggest challenge of all. Because we've seen experiences of women who fought and sacrificed and were martyred, and they really did it on an equitable basis with men. And then after the revolution was won, the women returned to the kitchen. And returned to the veil. Now we say "we don't want that; we want to do something else", but we don't know how.

One answer is that we should always push the gender issue and not be satisfied with answers that are being given to us by our male compatriots - that the national issue is paramount now and the gender issue comes later. We should always say no, they come hand in hand.

Zelda: Repression is one of the factors that shape popular education. My presentation about the South African context will be about strengthening democracy, and how difficult it is under repression. Democratic structures are annihilated under repression; democracy then becomes very difficult.

Mary: In certain cases repression can be fertile ground. It can breed democracy.

Zelda: It depends. If the leaders go into hiding and cannot meet with their base, then democracy cannot take place.

Bess: I don't know if it's possible for democracy to happen under repression.

Zelda: It's ironic. In our situation, we've discovered that even though the state represses, people find other spaces for forming democratic organizations. Within the church, or within state organizations. But there are problems. If it's a mass-based organization, for example, you need public space to hold meetings in order to make democratic decisions. But if that public space is violated, you cannot meet and therefore you cannot make democratic decisions.

Mary: But you know it's not only decision-making that constitutes democratic practice - you may not be able to make "democratic" decisions but you can still be democratic. Theoretically, decisions should always come from the bottom up, and elections also. But that does not always occur. In certain conditions, some decisions have to be made by the leadership and sometimes they are not very good decisions, and so they are criticised later. The leadership is accountable.

Zelda: That sounds like a contradiction. It's a "democratic" organization, yet the decision is not necessarily one all people participate in making. That's a representative form of democracy: some people make the decision "on behalf of" or "in the interests of" others.

Mary: Sometimes you have to forsake democratic decision-making in order to get decisions made. But that doesn't mean you sacrifice the whole democratic structure. I think it's really an issue of building a set-up that encompasses everybody. Committees, for example, where everybody has a role.

Zelda: It depends on whether you have actually built strong organizations in the first instance. And whether organizations can survive the repression.

Mary: Why is it that some survive and others don't?

Zelda: Structures are weakened under repression, and it's very difficult to rebuild them. It's difficult, but it can be done. The more repressive our state has become, the higher our political consciousness. And that in itself strengthens organizations.

In our situation, we built quite a number of organizations from the bottom up. Then we reached a stage where we needed a national organization that would bring together the leaders of all the local and sectoral organizations. But when those leaders began putting their energy into work at the national level, the local organizations were weakened. So you have to go back and strengthen the base. Go back and rebuild.

Accountability is important. It's one of the challenges for us in NGOs and popular organizations. You can use a participatory form of democracy in your local organization but if you're actually talking about making a decision in a mass-based organization with five thousand people, can you use the same form? We are not in power, but our organizations form the embryos of the new society. How do you make that transformation? Now we have to start thinking about democracy not only in the context of a particular popular organization but in the society at large.

One of the questions we are currently asking is, once we are liberated and have a new state, will this state nationalize the NGOs? I predict that some NGO's will want to become part of the state apparatus. But others may choose to remain outside the state. And they may be jailed.

Mary: If our movements ever do come to power, will we remain democratic? That is the crux of the issue - because in many countries, they just forget all about democracy.

Bess: That's the crucial role of education.

Zelda: In South Africa, our struggle at the moment is against national oppression, but within that struggle there is a struggle for socialism. But what kind of socialism are we talking about? We haven't come to terms with that yet. If we are talking about a socialist society based on participatory democracy, then obviously participatory democracy is a practice to be introduced into local organizations, NGOs and trade unions. If we are talking about a socialism which is authoritarian, then it wouldn't be necessary to be democratic within local organizations. It would be a waste of time.

One of the main aspects of national oppression is authoritarianism, particularly male authoritarianism. And so for some people, especially feminists, the struggle against oppression is also a struggle against authoritarianism, even within liberation organizations. We've learned authoritarianism from our oppressors, and do not conduct our organizations differently.

Mary: Authoritarianism is a part of many ideologies, even on the left. It's not only the oppressor, it's our own modes of oppression.

And that brought us back again, to a discussion of popular education, building a base, building democratic organization, building for empowerment . . . in conditions of repression and in processes of liberation.

"You can use participatory democracy in your local organization but if you're actually talking about making a decision in a mass-based organization with five thousand people, can you use the same form?"

Emma Stutz

INTRODUCTION ●

Women and funding

THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM UNDERtook an organizational review in 1989. At that time, the Program was in a financial crisis. Thus, an important part of the process involved assessing current policy towards funding women's programming and networks within international agencies. Through discussions with both funders and other women's groups and networks, it became clear that the same funding crisis we were facing was also being faced by many women's organizations around the world as agencies' policies towards women are changing. The potential result of these changes is that even less money will be made available to projects specifically targeted at women in this coming period; agencies will exert more control over the kinds of initiatives that are supported and it will be even harder for new groups to break into the "international funding" arena.

We felt it important not to tackle the problem merely as a question of survival for our office or the Women's Program; the issue of women's groups' dependence on government and aid funding where accountability exists in one direction (from us to funders) and control in another (by funders over what work is or is not appropriate) is a political issue.

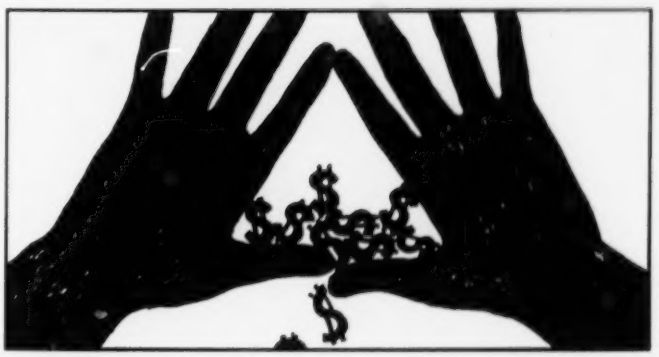
As a modest contribution to this process we are sharing some of what we have learned in order to promote further sharing and discussion among groups in the network. The following excerpts are from two primary sources: the *Women's Program Organizational Review*, published in January 1990; and presentations given at a public forum, "Up In Alms: Women's Organizations Internationally Confront the Funding Crisis," which we organized in Toronto to coincide with the meeting of our Advisory Committee in November 1989.

Our aim is to contribute to a critical awareness and collective analysis of the funding crisis. The material that follows raises more questions than it answers. In spite of international trends that affect all of us, it is clear that there are important differences in our experiences, depending on the region we're working in, whether we are working at the local, regional and international level, and our histories with funding agencies. We need to know more about these differences and similarities. And we need to know more about the contexts in which different funders are operating, since development agencies, church organizations, private foundations and NGOs have different contingencies, possibilities and limitations. Our strategies for action and alliance need to be more precise and thoughtful if we are not only to survive but to find more effective ways to work for women's empowerment and to build strong movements for women.

What can be done and how can we work in ways that will help one another, rather than accepting the dynamic of competition which the funding crisis imposes on women's groups? We are well aware that many donors are also struggling to find ways to effectively support progressive initiatives. Most important is to begin a dialogue that can facilitate a constructive move toward resolving this critical situation in a way that advances our commitment to women's struggle for equity, social justice and democracy. In order to do this, we as women's groups need to be clear about our needs and concerns, and able to share with others in an open dialogue rather than confronting each other as competitors for a shrinking pot of money.

BY HONOR FORD-SMITH

After the Decade:



TRENDS IN FUNDING TO WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The money available for women's activities has always been small. Until the Women's Decade many agencies made no allocations to women. However, during the Decade, the introduction of women as a category for funding in multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies and international NGOs enabled women's organizations all over the world to successfully apply for financial assistance. Women's development desks were widely incorporated into funding agencies in the 70s and 80s. In many of these organizations this process came as a result of the struggles of women within the ranks of the agency staff.

However, the amount of budget monies which women were able to access for "women and development" projects was still very small. In many cases it was as little as 10% of agency budgets (in other cases it has been impossible to quantify because of the way women are interspersed in different development agency projects - but generally we can say that it was a small percentage of agency budgets). The kind of projects agencies tended to develop and support were small "pilot" initiatives, often focussed on income generation or small business-type endeavours geared towards women.

These developments resulted in the creation of an international dependency on development agencies for the financial support of women's programs and movements. At the same time, an atmosphere of competition rapidly developed due to a relatively small amount of financing being accessed by a growing number of groups. Even state agencies in many countries, such as Women's Bureaux, are attempting to attract funds alongside small women's groups and NGOs with gender-specific programs.

This dependence negatively affects the internal functioning of groups. The processes of accountability set up within women's organizations in relation to aid agencies are many and complex. The pressures and demands of accounting to aid agencies very often overshadow and work against the need to account to the base we serve.

Funding to Women Since the Decade

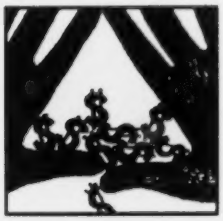
In the current period (1988 - 1990), many funding agencies have begun to change their policies toward women. A central change within the policy of international agencies is a move toward what is being called "mainstreaming." Mainstreaming aims to integrate gender concerns within what are called "general projects." In many ways it is a return to the situation which existed before the Decade, an approach which has been much criticized for the way in which it fails to recognize women's specific position in the household, their unremunerated, unrecognized domestic and subsistence labour and the skewed sexual division of labour in general. The present policy attempts to envision women as part of broad general programs, but requires that these programs contain a "gender component." At its most extreme, this policy would envision the abolition of women's desks within international agencies, to be replaced by the training of all agency officials in "gender and development."

The new mainstreaming trend is found in Canadian agencies, in Scandina-

vian agencies and in the European Economic Community. This situation has come about in part because of a reaction to the last ten years of focus on women's issues. The head of international relations in one agency described the reaction in this way:

> People are tired of "women." There's a feeling that solutions have been tried and they haven't worked and now it's time to move on. They want something fresh to think about - like the environment, say. When "women" come on to the agenda at international meetings, men go out to do their shopping. "Women" are still seen as nothing to do with their programs. On the other hand women's real needs are growing. So there's a contradiction.

It also represents a reaction to the special projects established for women during the Decade. Agencies claim these projects have reached only a small number of women and rather than empowering women have served to further marginalize them - that is, to confine them to a ghettoized "women's" area, and keep them out of "richer" and "larger"



programs. The view is that these small projects have somehow worked against the goals they were originally set up to achieve; the trend needs to be reversed and women need to be conceptualized broadly within general categories. The difference is that now gender will be a tool to analyze the situation of women within this context.

This trend raises a number of questions. First, where mainstreaming is adopted as policy, what will be the mechanisms to guarantee continued attention to women's power within these projects? How will women be sure that the apparently neutral category of "gender" will operate to empower them? Can project officers—the majority of whom are men operating in male dominated organizations with little knowledge or experience in dealing with gender—cope critically with the growing needs of women? Can crash courses in gender for project staff - unaccompanied by changes in the structures of many of these organizations - result in positive effects for women?

Why are policies towards women being conceptualized in such an "either/or" fashion? Clearly women need both women-specific and integrated activities and organizations. It goes without saying that women need to participate as equals in all processes of development and so in this sense resistance to ghettoized/underfunded women's projects is well placed. However, we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Women are struggling to develop mechanisms which guarantee that the small gains we have made can become institutionalized practice. Women-specific projects offer that potential. It is well-documented that women's projects, though often small and under-funded, provide women with experience that enables them to take on leadership posi-

The Context

The World Decade for Women came to an end in 1985. During the decade, a range of women's networks, organizations and movements developed that represent varied perspectives on women's situation and varied feminist responses to it. A major gain of the decade was the strengthening of an organized post-colonial feminist movement and the strengthening of feminism among women of colour.

However, the question of what strategy or strategies should be pursued in order to bring about social transformation in women's interest was difficult to resolve. At the end of those ten years, the consensus among women meeting in Nairobi was that although the consciousness of women had been raised, the material conditions facing women had declined.

Since then, the material conditions in most of the "developing" world have continued to deteriorate for both men and women. The crisis has different faces: the ecological (food-fuel-water) crisis, the balance of payments and debt crisis, increased militarization and violence, and ideological crises. Globally, these are widening the gap between the so-called "advanced" and "underdeveloped countries."

In this context women's material conditions are declining. Where access to food and housing becomes critical, it is women's food intake that is reduced. Where access to education declines, it is women who first experience restrictions on where we can go to school and what kinds of school and skills training are available to us. Needs are growing in all areas of survival - housing, food, primary health, education, and in access to work. This survival crisis affects the kind and quality of work women are able to do, and produces related issues around leisure, because where hospital facilities are cut down, where education is cut, it is women's position in the household that subsidizes these needs. It is women who have to take care of the sick, the old and children when state subsidized facilities get cut.

Alongside of this economic trend there has been a change in the ideological climate that we see both in the countries of the "north" and in the "south." This has manifested

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tions by helping to develop critical consciousness, skills and confidence in a supportive setting.

New Priorities

At the same time as mainstreaming is being implemented, there is also a trend to prioritize other issues. In many European development agencies the coming attractions are Debt, the Environment, and a return to the well-tried Population Control. Small scale industrialization is still popular and is becoming increasingly so as a response to the debt crisis. These issues, in particular the environment and the debt, are being kept before the public through media coverage. How will women figure within these issues? We've seen a lot of discussion in the media about struggles with the debt crisis but we haven't seen much about how women's position in the economy relates to this issue.

International Networking

There are other factors affecting funding available to a program like the ICAE Women's Network. With the possible exception of some Nordic agencies and the Dutch, most agencies, particularly some of the richest, give international networks a low priority. In the U.S., support for women's international networks is poor. Many agencies, both in the U.S. and elsewhere, do not have a department for international agencies and so proposals have to be circulated through regional desks. At the Ford Foundation we were told that international proposals had to be approved by all four regional desks - a clear indication of low priority. In general most agencies prefer "direct links" with groups in the Third World. The Ford Foundation in the U.S., for example, places a very high priority on direct relationships with national grassroots groups.

In the rhetoric of some donor agencies, justification for the emphasis on direct links and strengthening regional bodies appropriates the language of the left. There is reference to the importance of "building the grassroots leadership," to the lack of Third World leadership in the international women's networks and to the importance of building regional and national self-reliance. This suggests that groups which meet these criteria would be well supported. Yet the experience of many so-called Third World groups working with the grassroots at a national level has shown that meeting these criteria is no guarantee of funding support.

A central problem with the way international networking among women is conceptualized by funders is a lack of attention to the profound effects it has on local practice. The world faces problems generated by an unequal division of labour and unequal trading arrangements. These conflicts manifest differently from place to place, but they have an international scope. Preferred or exclusive emphasis on women's work at the community or regional level prevents women from effectively coordinating our work at a global level. The director of one women's network called it the "keep the girls at home strategy."

A more serious implication is that international linkages around issues of gender are forced to be mediated through the agencies themselves or through the state. There are obvious problems with this on many levels. Let us take the example of women working in garment factories and in micro chip production. These women have to fight the exploitative conditions arising out of this new phenomenon, while at the same time struggling to keep their right to work. This fight can only be effective if it is waged internationally. The state is an obstacle to this struggle, since it is the state which has set up the free trade zones where export processing factories are located. International work through these channels will have limited potential for women, and will obviously condition the possibilities and effectiveness of international alliances. Given the political and economic motivations behind the aid relationship, it is obvious why direct national linkages are important for agencies. This situation is unlikely to change.

Edited and excerpted from the *ICAE Women's Program Organizational Review* by Honor Ford-Smith and Sue Thrasher, 1990 and a presentation by Honor Ford-Smith at "Up In Alms".

The Context

(continued from previous page)

itself in a rise in religious fundamentalism, a "collapse" of socialism and the phenomenon of "ethnic" conflict. This shift has ground the debate about women's social position to a near-halt. Women as equals in society, women's freedom of sexuality, women's freedom to exercise reproductive choice or choice about our household arrangements, women's economic independence and our freedom to live without fear of physical or sexual violence have also been undermined.

At the same time as women's needs are growing, women's organizations are confronting a crucial challenge. Over the years since the Decade for Women was begun, women's organizations have reached a stage of development where all over the world we have begun to institutionalize. We are faced with urgent questions about internal processes and structures necessary to make our services and campaigns effective. We are examining issues of impact and of accountability. We are struggling to theorize our goals, to make qualitative changes in women's lives and to make changes in economic and political structures. As never before, many mixed-gender organizations are forced to grapple with ways of introducing into their work a dimension which takes gender into account.

We are confronting these problems in an atmosphere of economic difficulty and a new wave of ideological attack . . . and of shifting and decreasing funding support.

Adapted from the *ICAE Women's Program Organizational Review* by Sue Thrasher and Honor Ford-Smith and a presentation by Honor Ford-Smith at "Up In Alms, Women's Organizations World-wide Confront the Funding Crisis," Toronto, November 1989.

PlAying THE FuNding GAme

Lessons from CAFRA

by Tina Johnson
(CAFRA Secretariat, TRINIDAD)

"I work at a rape crisis centre, and we've been asked to become self-sufficient. There is no possible way to organize rape survivors into some income generating project to support the crisis centre. It sounds ridiculous but that's been asked by one funding agency."

When CAFRA (Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action) was formed in 1985 we didn't have any money at all. The secretariat was voluntary. The idea was that those of us who formed the secretariat would concern ourselves with proposal writing and raising funds, which at the time was something that we had very little experience with. We learned a lot quickly.

We went through a lot of problems in learning about the different funders, what the different agencies fund and the language that different funding agencies use. You have to know both what kind of projects they fund and what ways they talk about their projects before you can approach them. The first two projects that we wrote proposals for were on violence against women and on agriculture.

We wasted a lot of time not having done the right research. For example, we sent the violence proposal to several agencies and in one case we discovered that the agency had transferred its focus from the Caribbean to Africa after we had gone through the whole process of writing the proposal; in another case the agency had transferred its area of interest from violence to some other issue.

For about two years we were not funded and our coordinator and administrative assistant worked without salary. The coordinator worked almost full-time, was finishing off her degree at night and had two children. Getting the projects funded was no solution. We learned that most funding agencies like to fund projects rather than to give institutional support. Funders are much more comfortable with funding projects that have a beginning, a clear end and a written report. They are not so interested in process; they are more interested in something concrete which looks good in their annual report.

When we got funding for the projects there was still no money to pay for the project coordination and administration by the secretariat. That money had to be borrowed from the project. The accounting for the project had to be done in such a way that money was available for administration in Trinidad - not for salary assistance, just for postage, telephone, etc.

Part of the problem was our own inexperience in actually writing budgets. At the beginning we didn't put in all the money that was needed for long distance communication and training. We had two trainers from the Dominican Republic who hadn't been budgeted for properly. What we've learned to do is to build part of the coordinator's salary into the project, or build part of the administrative assistance costs into each project.

We've also learned that it's very important to have personal contact with funders. I don't know how many proposals they receive every day from various women's organizations and every other kind of organization. If they meet you and realize that what you are doing is important, that you're very serious about your work and have accountability as well - some financial system in place and books to show them - then they are much more prepared to fund you and also to recommend you to other funders. It's a snowball effect: once you get one or two funders supporting a project, other funding agencies become interested.

One issue now is this question of "self-sufficiency." It is not only a demand from the funders. There is concern about whether we want to be totally dependent on funding agencies, especially when they are beginning to shift money into other areas. At CAFRA we've always argued

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that it is impossible for a membership network which runs projects in different territories to be totally self-sufficient because even if a particular project becomes self-sufficient, that wouldn't sustain the organization. The agricultural project, for example, may result in the women in the communities setting up self-sufficient projects for themselves but that doesn't provide CAFRA with any income. I also work at a rape crisis centre and we've been asked to become self-sufficient. There is no possible way to organize rape survivors into some income generating project to support the rape crisis centre. It sounds a bit ridiculous but that's been asked by one funding agency.

There is a need for NGOs in the Caribbean region to get together to meet with funding agencies so that rather than funding agencies telling us what our priorities should be, what kinds of programs we should develop, we can be telling them what our needs are. We don't want to be in competition with the other organizations. We want to deal with funders in a very honest and open way. We don't want them to be playing us off against each other. We're always asked, "Well, what do you think of this or that organization?" It puts you on the spot because whatever you may think about the organization, you don't want to say that they should not be funded. It is unfair of funders to ask about other organizations, to make you responsible in a sense for whether or not that organization gets funding.

I think it is important to pool our knowledge of funding agencies in a group where we can put our concerns on the table and discuss them in a very open way. It is also very important to be open with funders because they talk to each other as well.

Excerpted from a presentation at the "Funding Women's Organizations" workshop at the ICAE Fourth World Assembly, Bangkok - January 1990.

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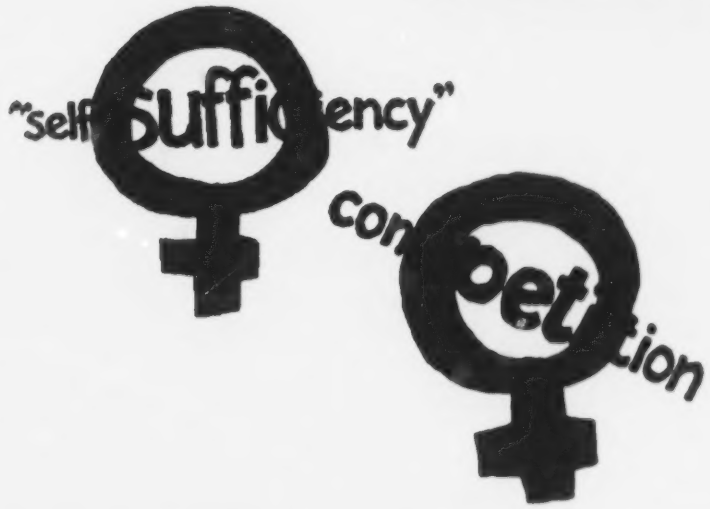

EXPLORING THE ALTERNATIVES TO STATE FUNDING IN CANADA

● BY ALICE DE WOLFF
Executive Director, National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)

Since the mid-1970s a large proportion of Canadian women's organizations and institutions have been supported by government funding. In the last two years, however, government commitment to providing financial support, at both federal and provincial levels, is shakier than it has been for 15 years. We are experiencing a distressing decline in government, industry and media recognition that organized women are legitimate contributors to social and economic policy and programs.

I think it is important to discuss such developments in Canadian policy towards women in an international forum because these developments are likely to affect Canada's official development assistance and Canadian non-governmental funders.

In their current campaigns to reduce deficits, the federal and most provincial governments have begun to cut back on all sources of funds for women's organizations. These cuts are described as pragmatic belt tightening. The federal government cut its Women's Program by 15%, along with its Native and Multiculturalism Programs. The target of these cuts has been "operational" funds, meaning that the bulk of monies available for women's groups are project funds. This allows for greater government control over the issues on which public money is spent, and for increased flexibility for government to decide what issues it wishes to emphasize.

One of the policy shifts we feel is being tested in these cuts is whether government can get away with eliminating all

its support to advocacy groups, i.e., groups which engage in political activities. The mate to this strategy is to provide funding to non-governmental organizations only for service work, particularly service work which is an extension of government policy. This is not a new strategy, but the combination may further a current trend amongst women's organizations to become a-political and entirely service related.

The impact of the cuts is already apparent. Organizations that receive funding have decided to cut newsletters and reduce their regional networking budgets. Our feminist periodicals are in particular jeopardy. The cuts operate as a virtual freeze on the number of groups which will receive stable funding. This means that immigrant women's organizations, visible minority women's organizations, disabled women's organizations and native women's organizations are not likely to receive secure funding.

I want to illustrate my concerns about what the cuts mean for the ability of Canadian women to continue to speak to politicians and policy makers. The organization I work for, NAC, received a cut of $300,000 or 50% over three years. NAC is the largest women's organization in Canada. Its primary objectives are political mobilizing, education and lobbying in the name of our 570 member groups. It has been in the business of "integrating women's concerns into policy decision making," which has necessarily meant that its members have been critical of all governments since its origins. The current budget cuts mean that all of us, staff, volunteers and the executive board, are feeling the strain of an ever-expanding need for political action, and the necessity to spend large amounts of our time and resources looking for new sources of funding.

Our choices include: using our official "charitable" status to raise funds; developing a substantial direct mail campaign asking for donations which do not require charitable receipts; and approaching foundations for project money.

Let's look at these options a bit. The limitations and extra work associated with foundation project grants have been well-documented [and are discussed in this issue of *Voices Rising*]. In the discussion that follows I want to focus briefly on the options of charitable and non-charitable donations.

"As we are pushed into doing private fundraising we will find ourselves having to develop entirely new strategies if we are to avoid importing regulated inequalities into the structure and work relations of our organizations."

Charitable sources

Charitable registration with the state is one of the most common ways for agencies to announce to donors that they are accountable and legitimate. It is also attractive to donors because they can claim the donation as a credit on their Income Tax Return Form. Large fundraising without charitable status in Canada is very difficult. However, because charitable status is regulated by Tax Law, there are strict requirements associated with the acquisition and use of officially charitable funds. For example, charitable funds may not be use for political or advocacy purposes.

I learned about further constraints around charitable funds through a study I conducted several years ago with the Women's Caucus of a Canadian charitable agency that funds international projects. It was a progressive agency that had chosen to decrease its dependence on government funding so that it could fund "progressive" work overseas. In order to make this change it started a large private fundraising campaign.

The question the Women's Caucus was attempting to address at the time of my study was "Why did women do the lower status fundraising and men do the higher status project work?" Or, how was it that in an apparently collective, non-hierarchical organization the women involved with fundraising felt like they were doing the unimportant work, and the project officers were able to act as management?

The best way into these questions was to examine the organization's work processes, and particularly those of the women. It showed us that there was a large sub-strata of low paid, part-time, contract and volunteer workers, almost all women, who processed the fundraising receipts. They were carrying out a highly regulated set of tasks which the government required in order for the agency to issue charitable receipts. They did not show up in the organization's descriptions of itself as a collective.

The agency could not pay all volunteers and grant workers at the collective rate of pay to do this work and stay within the 20% limit on administrative spending [imposed on agencies raising charitable funds]. The low paid, volunteer character of that kind of work is maintained through the regulation of charities and charitable donations outlined in the Tax Act. In attempting to become more "progressive" and independent of government, agency workers had imported structural inequali-

ties into their work relations. The gendered character of the inequalities came about through the day to day pragmatic decisions that agency members made about how to deal with this situation: i.e., their selection of women as appropriate volunteers, combined with women's own self-selection as clerical workers rather than program workers.

In the development agency the inequalities brought about in the work process of private fundraising became apparent around gender. Many women's organizations have tried very hard to develop collective, non-hierarchical and anti-racist work relations. The danger for these groups is that we will find ourselves with low-paid, part-time and voluntary workers who are women of colour or women who are less educationally advantaged - reproducing through our work the kinds of relations we are fighting in the rest of society. As we are pushed into doing private fundraising we will find ourselves having to develop entirely new strategies if we are to avoid importing the regulated inequalities of that work into the structure and work relations of our organizations.

Unreceipted private donations

This is the only source which will provide us with funds which we can legally use to conduct our political and administrative work - which is the bulk of NAC's work. The work involved is as labour intensive as charitable fundraising, but there are no limitations on our use of the funds, i.e., we can use them for administration and our political activities. NAC is therefore beginning a campaign which focusses on developing a relation with women donors, encouraging the women of Canada to feel a certain ownership in the work of their organization. We are aware, however, that we must educate our donors about why we need funds that are not charitable. And we are increasingly holding discussions with other groups about how to conduct our campaigns so that we do not end up competing with each other for supporters and donors.

What We Can Do

Canadian policy seems intent on moving more of the service work and almost all of the advocacy work of women's organizations outside the sphere of government, expecting us to find "private" sources to support our attempts to end discrimination against women. It seems to me that, along with the practical changes we have to make, we must be increasingly prepared to:

- be vigilant around the slide into service work and to oppose changes which will make us inappropriately reliant on women's voluntary labour and unpaid labour in our homes;
- be insistent that advocacy work is part of the state's policy development process, and that women do not have the resources to finance the business of integrating their concerns;
- develop coordinated campaigns between our organizations, including between Canadian women and women from the Third World, because we will soon all be approaching the same donors, whether they are individuals, foundations or charities;
- educate donors to make straight donations, without expecting charitable receipts;
- work on a campaign to change the Tax Act, to lift the restrictions on administration and charitable donations, or to create tax exempt status for advocacy groups;
- develop new workplace strategies to ensure that we do not import racial and class inequalities into our work relations.

Excerpted from a presentation at the Women's Program "Up in Alms" Forum.

Post Script:

This presentation was made in November 1989. In February 1990 the federal government cut its Women's Program by another 15%, completely withdrawing support for 80 women's centres and three large women's publications, and seriously reducing support to another four women's groups that conduct community-based research. In the same budget the Native Communications Program was eliminated and support for aboriginal advocacy groups was severely reduced.

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LISTEN FUNDERS!

Our first funding agency experience was not a good one. The agency had what I have always called the "adopt you, drop you, and in-between use you for PR" policy. You are so wonderful, you're women and you're grassroots, and they just want to take you over and adopt you. And then when you change direction slightly—and of course as we evaluate our work we're shifting all the time—or when they're ready, they just drop you. But in between, while you're just their cup of tea and just too good to be true, you find that you are their public relations agent. You're being touted as the most wonderful project of their's and they're the cat's whiskers!

Hilary Nicolson (Sistren Theatre - Jamaica)
Excerpted from "Building Democratic Women's Organizations",
***Voices Rising*, April/May 1988.**

I'm having difficulty with the term "partnership." After fifteen years of experience with development agencies I want to say that I don't think it is partnership. Funding agencies are at the top; we're at the bottom. We have to present you with accounts, and my god, so many of them are so elaborate that I who teach at the university have a hard time with them. But we in return don't have any input into this accounting business from your end.

A partnership implies some sort of sharing in decision making. You come all the

Listen Funders! continued on page 32

Questioning Official Development Assistance

IN THE PHILIPPINES

By Carol Anonuevo
Center for Women's Resources

Four years ago, the attention of the world was focussed on the Philippines after a successful popular uprising ousted Marcos. At that time, the Marcos dictatorship had accumulated a $26B debt, a large chunk of it going to aid his family's bank accounts all over the world. Part of the loans also went to the implementation of the export-oriented development strategy peddled by the International Monetary Fund-World Bank. Much of this strategy failed, resulting in the increasing pauperization of the Filipinos. For the many who organized and struggled to change this oppressive situation, the government responded with repression and militarization.

After the overthrow of Marcos in February 1986, the Filipinos thought that all this would change. Governments all over the world expressed support for the restoration of democracy by pledging economic assistance to rehabilitate our economy. The Canadian government was no different. In fact, it took a bolder stance that year; it announced that the Philippines had become a priority area for development assistance.

Part of the strategy was to involve Canadian and Filipino NGOs, international agencies and the Canadian commercial sector in development programs in the Philippines. One hundred million Canadian dollars were allocated for a trial period of two years during which CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) was to "gather program experience and probe future options."

Perhaps one of the major proposals that emerged from this strategy is the Negros Rehabilitation Development Fund, where $11M was allocated for four fiscal years. Today CIDA is being criticized in the Philippines, as well as by Canadian NGOs, because much of the support has gone to private foundations in Negros which are synonymous with landlord projects. Canadian taxpayers' money has been channeled to fund not only economic projects but also, in an indirect way, landlords' private armies and the consequent militarization. In short, many NGOs and people's organizations are saying that Canadian money has supported counter-insurgency efforts in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, in the last two years, it has become evident that the Aquino development model is no different from that of her predecessor. Our foreign debt has already risen to $28B and our government panel for debt negotiations has committed the toil of the Filipinos towards the repayment of these debts. For the year 1989, 43% of our total budget has been allocated for debt servicing. This means that there is only so much left for education, health and social services. Minimum wages have not been raised to the level that is necessary for decent living. Thousands of Filipinos sacrifice being together with their families to seek out jobs all over the world. For the women, this means working as domestic helpers in Hong Kong, Singapore, the Middle East and Canada. It means working as prostitutes in Japan and Europe and as nurses in the U.S. or the Middle East.

LISTEN FUNDERS!

— continued from page 35 —

time to evaluate us, and we have no opportunity to evaluate you. And I have a lot to say about that. But we never have the avenue to do that. You interfere with our policy generally - you tell us in a very polite way, "If you change this program to make it more towards education then we're going to give you money." But we have no right to change your policy by telling you, "Look we need this this year, and not that."

In the end we really are at the bottom, you're at the top and when we try to liberate ourselves - using your own jargon - to be "self-reliant" by asking for endowments, you invariably refuse. We're trying to liberate ourselves from dependency but cannot do it, precisely because you agencies refuse to provide us with this fantastic chance to live off an endowment like you.

Rita Giacaman (Union of Medical Relief Committees, Occupied Palestine) Excerpted from a discussion at the North/South Dialogue at the ICAE Fourth World Assembly, Bangkok - January 1990.

As we badly need dollar remittances, the government has encouraged this outflow of women, with Aquino calling them the saviours of the country.

It is in this context that many women's groups are now working in the Philippines, and relating to CIDA. In October 1988, a number of women's organizations which form a significant block of the women's movement decided to band together to form the "Group of 10" to grapple with the issues of development aid and women's issues. The first project was a paper, "Women, Development and Aid", which was drafted by women in the Group. CIDA gave us funds to consult with around 600 women all over the country from the grassroots and different sectors (labour, peasant, urban poor, academics, women in arts and health) about their views on the paper and to come up with a needs assessment which could inform the CIDA Human Resources Development thrust.

Canadian taxpayers' money has been channeled to fund, not only economic projects but also, in an indirect way, landlords' private armies and the consequent militarization. In short many NGOs and people's organizations are saying that Canadian money has supported counter-insurgency efforts in the Philippines....

In the process of our consultations with these women, a number of issues kept cropping up.

1. The women from Negros, whose husbands, sons and fathers have been killed or arrested and whose families have been displaced by the ongoing militarization in the countryside, are asking why we are getting money from CIDA when it has been funding the landlord projects and indirectly causing their displacement and misery.

2. On the other hand, women's groups who have seen the possibilities of more long-term funding have asked, why not? Won't more money mean more resources to help women?

3. As CIDA's focus is on "human resources development" we must ask why are they "developing" our women? Is it so women can be efficiently inserted in the World Bank and IMF Development Strategy?

3. What is the impact of official development assistance (ODA) on women in general and on the women's movement in particular? Will more and more convenient women's organizations be formed so that money can be channeled to them?

4. As CIDA aid is bilateral assistance and therefore works directly with our government, does this mean co-optation of women's groups by the government?

5. What will CIDA's position be vis-à-vis human rights violations committed by the military and vigilante groups against women in the supported communities?

6. And finally, the big question: Why is CIDA interested to fund the women's movement, which has continuously raised the issues of imperialism, corruption and structural defects?

As a result of our consultations, we have come to the conclusion that we know too little about the nature and impact of ODA on women. For instance, just like the colonizers' strategy of dividing the world, First World governments have conveniently divided the Philippines into "areas of responsibility." Canada is pouring a lot of money into Negros and two other regions in Mindanao, while a number of European development agencies are doing so in Northern Luzon. But what specifically is its impact on women?

We have resolved to study the impact of official development assistance on women and women's groups as more and more is earmarked for women's projects.

Write to us at:
The Group of Ten
c/o Center for Women's Resources
43 Roces Avenue, 2nd Floor
Quezon City
PHILIPPINES

Excerpted from a presentation at the Women's Program Forum "Up In Alms".

UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDING GAME: SISTREN'S POPULAR THEATRE EXPERIENCE

We have developed a drama-in-education workshop to explore issues relating to funding: which donor funds what, whom and why? I have conducted the workshop here in Jamaica, with "project carriers" and others, also with women's groups in Trinidad. It is a big concern of mine that only those projects/organizations that develop an awareness and understanding of the "international funding game" get a chance to access funds. Do you think this popular education would be of interest to other struggling groups? Do you know how others are learning and sharing about the "funding game" and politics thereof?

Hilary Nicholson / Sistren Theatre Collective
20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica

Note: Sistren Theatre Collective has also contributed a revealing case study of the effect of playing the "international funding game" on their organizational development and democratic practices. Ring Ding in a Tight Corner, by former artistic director Honor-Ford Smith, is available from the ICAE Women's Program.

AN IMPORTANT FUNDING RESOURCE

The Funding Newsnote *is an occasional bulletin produced in English, French and Spanish by the International Women's Tribune Centre. The* Newsnote *was started so that women's groups could begin to share information relating to the broad area of "women and funding" - information about funders, issues related to funding for women's projects - and to begin a process of collectively developing strategies which will both increase the amount of funding available for all women's groups, and at the same time begin to broaden the scope of issues that the funding community will support.*

The Funding Newsnote *is available on request only, and is distributed free of change to individuals and groups in Third World countries. All others are asked to pay US$6 per subscription for three issues. The Women$hare project, of which the* Newsnote *is a part, is coordinated by IWTC Programme Associate, Alice Quinn.*

Women$hare Project
IWTC 777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY
10017 USA

by Lalita Ramdas

Literacy

The Critique from Below

From March 5 to 9, 1990, over 1500 NGO and governmental representatives attended the World Education for All by the Year 2000 conference which took place in Jomtien, Thailand. The conference was sponsored by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP. The International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL) and NGO committees of UNESCO and UNICEF worked together to organize a special one-day briefing session for NGO delegates before the conference. Lalita Ramdas, one of the panelists at the ITFL roundtable, focussed her presentation on a critique of the major conference documents from a gender and grassroots perspective. The following excerpts are from her speech and an ITFL statement prepared prior to the conference.

Gender and the Challenge to Educational Theory

CEAAL

Feminist scholars have identified the control and exploitation of women's sexuality and the sexual division of labour as the "two mutually supportive and powerful mechanisms of subordination." Inevitably, this has serious implications for an educational perspective and policy. Today many of us are reformulating literacy as a women's issue and posing what might be termed a "feminist challenge" to educational theory and practice.

It is revealing in this light to assess the major documents of the Education for All conference in order to understand the language and context in which references to girls and women are made, and to judge, if possible, the level of visibility and commitment to gender.

Draft Documents and Women's Issues

The "World Charter" assigns women and girls to a place along with other disadvantaged populations under a sub-heading of "Reducing Disparities," and that too only on page 7 under article VIII:

An active commitment must be made to disadvantaged populations, for whom basic education is a means of reducing social, cultural and economic disparities; those who are disadvantaged because of gender (girls and women); economic status (the poor, street children and working children); location (rural, remote, and slum populations); dislocation (refugees and migrant workers); and disability (the physically or intellectually impaired).

There is no special focus on gender. One sees repeated emphasis on reducing male-female "gaps", be it in literacy levels or access to education; gender is treated as "just another" disadvantage; and there is a total absence of any attempt to develop a deeper, more serious analysis of the basic causes which have led to this situation and which might then suggest the solutions.

In "The Declaration," women have been "promoted" to page 2 from page 7 and find mention twice in the basic document. But the language and context need attention. The preamble says:

More than 960 million adults, two thirds of whom are women, are illiter-

CEAAL

ate and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all countries.

Article III, item 3, refers to women with somewhat more emphasis but with restricted application:

In the countries where female enrolment and literacy rates are much lower than those for males, the most urgent priority is to improve access to, and the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated.

The primary focus here again serves to stress the need to bring "females" on par with "males" in terms of enrolment, access and participation, but without adequate attention to underlying causes which lead to their educational marginalization.

In essence, however, nothing has really changed in terms of substance and thrust as far as the analysis and position on gender is concerned. It is plain that the position of the WCEFA documents does not give the centrality and priority which gender justice calls for, particularly in an environment which is increasingly unsupportive and often hostile to women's needs and problems.

Education and Policy–Who Decides?

Many of us working in the NGO sector, and with women's networks across the world, would contend that this absence of any in-depth understanding of gender issues, as reflected in the documents, is hardly surprising! We have come to expect nothing less in a scenario where positions of power and decision-making are generally dominated by men, or where predominantly "patriarchal values" prevail. This is true in most fields of economic, social and political activity. The sphere of education is no exception. Male dominance in literacy policy-making is more than a little ironic however, given the reality of the world situation. Statistics and data repeatedly tell us that the majority of those who have been systematically denied equal opportunity in education and other spheres and are counted as "illiterate" are girls and women. It is also well known that the causes for this injustice are rooted in economic situations as much as in deep societal prejudices which are strongly influenced by patriarchy, and institutionalized through the family, culture, religion and the education process.

"If an education vision pledges itself to a 'revolutionary' and 'transformative' definition of literacy, then [certain] systems, controls, norms and traditions could be challenged, questioned, and even overthrown, through women's quest for literacy and justice."

Women bear the brunt of poverty and illiteracy, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. And while the situation is acute in developing countries, in industrialized nations too women are affected by the deteriorating economic environment, as testified to in countless documents.

The marginalization of women in society forms a common feature cutting across all other groups - be they tribal, landless, labour, indigenous peoples and other minorities, refugees, or disabled. The gender question transcends and underscores race and class issues too, thus involuntarily uniting women despite their global heterogeneity.

There can be little doubt that the conceptual framework on gender behind the entire documentation and, therefore, the thinking of the World Conference on Education for All, does not address itself to the basic reasons underlying gender injustice in all its many dimensions.

By drawing attention to the "blocks" and "obstacles" to women's development - such as lack of time, shortage of female teachers, distance of schools from home,

lack of child care, cultural and family constraints, resource constraints, and so on - education policy makers build a strong case for what can only be categorized as the "techno-managerial" manifestations of the problem. This also becomes a convenient mechanism for diverting attention away from the fundamental structural factors responsible for keeping girls and women subordinated, uneducated, and in their homes.

Coming to the question of women and gender justice, the explosive political potential of raising consciousness about the complex and manifold dimensions of gender oppression, female subjugation and discrimination is, if anything, even more threatening! It is self-evident that there is a set of systematic and structured familial, societal norms and values which derive from patriarchy, and which serve to keep women subjugated and confined to certain biological and stereotyped roles. This is true for women in all societies, from the least developed to the most industrialized, with differences being purely relative in degree. The male control over female access to education and literacy; the lowered self-image internalized by women themselves; the restrictions imposed on women's space and freedom by religion, custom and culture; these are all women's realities in their day-to-day world.

If an education vision pledges itself to a "revolutionary" and "transformative" definition of literacy, then all these systems, controls, norms and traditions could be challenged, questioned, and even overthrown, through women's quest for literacy and justice. Perhaps this is why there is no mention of words like "empowerment" or "liberation" in the draft documents.

A Call to Action from the International Task Force on Literacy

(EXCERPTS)

WE, THE MEMBERS OF the International Task Force on Literacy, represent a wide range of non-governmental organizations with an outreach to over 60 million people in nearly every corner of the world. We call upon ourselves, other NGOs, governments and Heads of State urgently to make effective commitments for literacy and principles which have been identified during our fifth meeting held in Suraj Kund, India in October 1989.

Mass illiteracy is inextricably linked with mass poverty, structural injustice and marginalization. Therefore, people need to be empowered as learners to get access to the education and knowledge which will enable them both to assume control over their own processes of growth, and to become active, responsible participants in a systematic process of social development.

Literacy therefore includes, but goes far beyond, the basic skills of reading and writing.

Women are the key figures in the global literacy campaign, as women and girls comprise about 70 percent of the illiterate populace. After excluding them from decision making structures through centuries of subjugation and discrimination, today there is an urgent need to utilize their wealth of insights and talents in every sphere of social, political and economic endeavour. To answer this need, a priority should be given to the education of girls and women in all literacy programming. This positive discrimination will, no doubt, have an uplifting influence on the quality of education as a whole.

Definition of Literacy

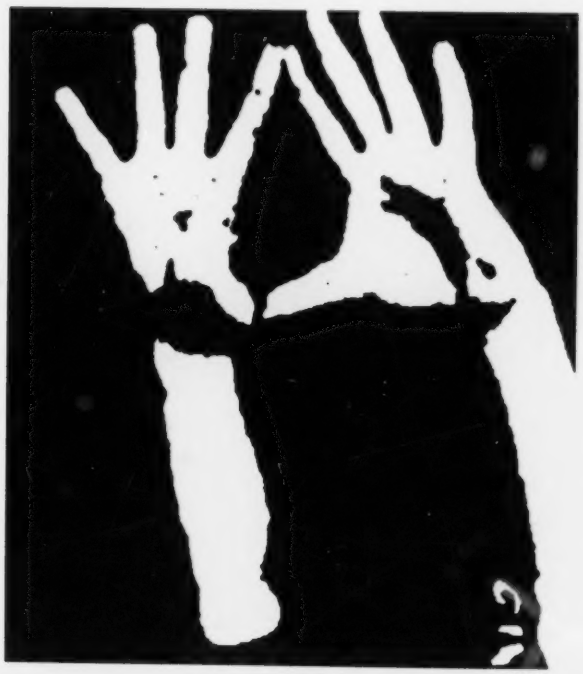
Literacy is defined as the set of knowledge, qualities, skills, attitudes and capacities that enable individuals to preserve self-esteem by assuming control over their own growth, and by becoming active participants in a process of social change that will lead to a more peaceful, just and harmonious society.

Women and Literacy

Women should be the central focus of all literacy programs. The root causes underlying the present dismal status of women's education are located in the structures of patriarchy which continue to influence attitudes and behaviours towards girls and women in many societies. This injustice based on gender is often compounded by class and economic factors and has significant implications for the nature and thrust of education policy and planning.

2.1 Program design must begin with an understanding of the specific cultural, social and economic problems faced by women.

2.2 Women's literacy programs must necessarily include a component for sensitiza-



tion and education of men in particular, and for other members of the family and society in general. Men should be prepared to accept the egalitarian situation which will come as a result of the education of women.

2.3 Every literacy effort should foster self-confidence in women.

2.4 Teacher training and material design; development, research and evaluation; and learning strategies must all address the particular needs and learning difficulties faced by women and girls.

2.5 The entire range of methodology for women's literacy should be process-oriented and should consciously promote dialogue between men and women and the full understanding of their equal partnership and shared responsibilities at home and in society.

2.6 Women should be taught how to cooperate to better promote the interests of women: to educate their daughters, jointly abandoning practices which are to their detriment such as dowry systems and preference for the male child, training the next generation to think differently and learning many forms of economic, social and political cooperation. As the first educators of their children, mothers can substantially determine the values of each generation.

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INDIA

Violence Against Women

In the last decades more and more women have been speaking out about sexual harassment and wife abuse, two forms of violence against women that pervade women's work places and homes.

Popular educators working with women have identified the continuing reality of this daily violence as an enormous obstacle to women's personal, economic and political development. We need to challenge the social conditions that encourage and permit wifebeating and sexual harassment. Needless to say, this is a long-term project that involves struggle and education in many areas and on different levels: with governments, with police forces and courts, with employers and unions - and, of course, with men in general. However, because these situations of violence tend to isolate women and crush them psychologically as well as physically, it is essential to begin with educational and support work that aims to strengthen women so that together, abused women can speak up and struggle against their intolerable conditions.

The first two articles of this section focus on the subject of battered women. "Battered Women: Breaking the Cycle," based largely on the experience of self-help groups for battered women, analyzes the situation faced by Argentinean women living with domestic violence. The second article, "Working Towards an End to Domestic Violence," discusses the approach used by these self-help groups and includes samples of their educational material. Lastly, "Knowing Our Rights, Defending our Integrity" introduces educational material developed by the Women's Secretariat of the Nicaraguan Association of Rural Workers, and deals specifically with two issues that attack women's integrity: sexual harassment in the work place and physical and psychological abuse in the home.

Battered Women: *Breaking the Cycle*

by Lucrecia Oller, Coordinator, Program to Prevent Domestic Violence
The Women's Place, Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

What Does a Battered Woman Feel?

Working with the subject of domestic violence requires a deep understanding of what the abused woman faces and how she feels, while maintaining an open mind and unprejudiced point of view.

The battered woman finds herself submerged in a situation of fear, self-depreciation, lack of self-confidence, and sometimes panic. She no longer believes herself capable of getting out of the situation on her own strength. Guilt and embarrassment push her further and further into isolation, and her extreme lack of self-esteem makes her think that no one will listen to her, believe her or respect her.

The abused woman tries, in many ways, to make her relationship with the abuser revert to its original state. She ignores her own desires and needs in an attempt to please the abuser, carrying submission to extremes, and she tries to anticipate his wishes. This, in turn, leads to the distortion of her relationships with other people. She becomes resentful and distrustful, and feels insecure, which she often attempts to cover up by acting defensively, screaming, and rejecting others.

One of the questions repeatedly asked, with irritation and impatience, about women who face domestic violence is, why do they continue to stay with the abuser? This question tends to make women themselves responsible for the situation in which they are immersed. It seems strange, when we are able to recognize the multiple factors conditioning gender relations, that we are not able to perceive how once again cultural and social expectations, and of course economic models, lead women to try to sustain relationships involving self-sacrifice and battery, even to the point of endangering their lives.

The Search for Alternatives

Our experience has forced us to adopt a perspective which includes both the subjectivity of the battered woman and the social dimension of the problem. Our approach is also based on the recognition of cultural conditioning factors which affect men and women, and which are manifested in the way both sexes feel and live.

Within this framework, the self-help groups for battered women have proven to be a suitable and efficient instrument for developing solidarity between women, strengthening their sense of self-worth and attaining a deep understanding of the situation.

Women who have suffered domestic violence and have been able to escape it, recognize that during long periods, in some cases for many years, they felt paralyzed. They were able to find refuge only in isolation, while hoping that something almost magical would happen to relieve them of their distressing situation.

No in-depth studies have been made which allow us to analyze the internal processes which lead woman to ask for help. It is possible that in some cases the shock of ever-increasing violence makes the woman realize that her life is in danger. But there are too many unfortunate cases indicating that proximity to death is not sufficient in itself.

Undoubtedly, women feel greater support as domestic violence becomes more visible in the public sphere, and as it is identified as a social phenomenon, shared by many women, which transcends the personal and private space.

Perhaps the search for outside help is also linked to the particular stage of life that the battered woman is going through. Our experience in the self-help groups shows that many of the women who are willing to search for ways to resolve their situations, even to the point of breaking off their relationship with the abuser, have gone through the first stage of raising children. It is possible that, while previously totally immersed in caring for their children, these women are now, upon completing this critical period, able to feel stronger and take a fresh look at themselves.

Excerpted from a document "Desde las mujeres y por el cambio social: los grupos de autoayuda entre mujeres golpeadas" (Coming From Women and Heading Towards Social Change: Self-Help Groups for Battered Women).

Lugar de Mujer
Corientes 2817
Piso 5B
Buenos Aires 1193
ARGENTINA

● Argentina

Self-Help Groups

Working Towards an End to Domestic Violence

by Lucrecia Oller

The First Step

In her search for a way out, the battered woman may at one point have spoken to a friend or neighbour - or perhaps have seen a flyer which invited battered women to participate in a self-help group - and one day, finally prompted by fear or an overwhelming desire to change her oppressive situation, she decides to make one more try.

Afraid and full of doubts, she finds herself sitting in a circle with other women who are speaking about themselves, about how they were able to break free from the same violence that she is now suffering.

As she hears their stories, she can see that no one is investigating details of the violence, but rather that each woman expresses what upsets her. The women support one another and search together for ways to overcome their problems and decide what to do from here on in.

Beginning to Develop Self-Esteem

Identifying with others, accepting them with all their defects, virtues, fears and lack of definition, helps each woman more easily to accept her own values and the different facets of her own personality. This is a critical point in the process: beginning to develop self-esteem.

The group becomes a space where the abused woman can begin to visualize her healing. She has ongoing communication with women who have been working at this for a long time, and who share what they've gone through with her. Under these circumstances, the first tangible thing she receives from the group is hope; she sees that others have been able to free themselves, and begins to think that perhaps she can too.

On her first visit, she is asked if she suffers from domestic violence and she gives her first name only. It is explained to her that she herself defines the length of her participation in the group, and that the only cost is giving to other women what she herself receives from the group.

When it is her turn to speak, the other participants listen attentively, respecting what she wishes to say. From the start she finds that the other women are extremely understanding, that all have gone through very similar situations, that each word represents a shared meaning, and that each silence is a moment of reflection.

All the participants are united in their solidarity with each other. Pain is shared and begins to fade. Loneliness and isolation disappear for the moment. To feel heard and understood is to begin to feel human. She starts to see the need and possibility to change her relationships with other people, and more importantly, that she is capable of changing her life and the chain of submission and violence.

She discovers that women as a gender suffer from discrimination, and that even though both sexes have similar cultural conditioning, the responsibility of the one who instigates violence is very different from the responsibility of the abused. She learns that there are cultural traditions which place men in a position of superiority that subordinates women, and that this must change, not only for her own good but also for the good of all women and the society as a whole.

Work Methodology

The methodology used in the self-help groups with battered women is inextricably linked to the objectives and results desired. If the objective is to modify a relationship with the rest of the world, then the group's structure and action must aim to reinforce the self-confidence, credibility and self-esteem of the abused woman.

With this in mind, the principal characteristics of a self-help group are the following:

- All coordinators have suffered from domestic violence. Each one has leadership qualities, is trained in group dynamics, attends bi-weekly meetings with other coordinators and an institutional psychologist, and is strongly committed to the issue.
- Coordination may be rotated, facilitating the training of new coordinators.
- The women are at different stages, including those who have recently arrived and others who have already broken free from violent situations. This offers a strong counter-example for women who still find themselves immersed in desperation and see no way out.
- Each woman defines the length of her participation in the group according to her own needs.
- The group does not recognize any rules or regulations other than those which the group itself has imposed on its members. This favours an attitude which is

autonomous, responsible and committed.

• There is an open and trusting atmosphere which helps the battered woman to heal her self-esteem and develop a sense of security.

• The group defines weekly tasks for each participant, with the aim of gradually modifying their personal or family situations. Each week the gains made and difficulties encountered are evaluated. These tasks promote an active approach, and help to develop self-confidence and the capacity to take initiative.

Educational Materials

Some of the popular educational material developed by The Women's Place in Argentina is used as part of the Program to Prevent Domestic Violence. Illustrated stories on cardboard, which show domestic violence developing out of different situations, are used as a tool to promote reflection on the causes of violence in the home and the possibilities of overcoming it. Specific reflections include:

• Domestic violence — social problem or family concern?

• The role of education and culture in creating differences between the sexes

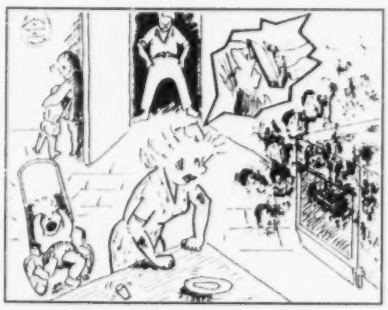
• How battered women can change their situations

• Self-help groups for abused women — are they useful?

Ricardo began to be more withdrawn and to return to the house late. Each week he gave Maria less money. He was becoming more violent, shouting, breaking glasses and kicking the furniture.

One night she tried to talk to him but he said he did not have to explain anything. He got very angry and struck her hard.

She isolated herself more and more, trying to avoid the neighbors and not discussing her problems with anyone. She felt alone and paralyzed by panic.



But the violence kept growing. Once after he hit me for burning the dinner, I saw the expression of desperation on the children's faces and felt like killing him. That really frightened me and I realized I needed to find help.

One day, when I was getting off the bus, I saw an announcement by the church about a talk on domestic violence. I didn't feel too hopeful, but since I was there, I decided to go in.

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● Nicaragua

Knowing Our Rights, Defending Our Integrity

Women farmworkers become conscious that change is possible

by Heather Chetwynd

Since 1983, the Nicaraguan Association of Rural Workers (ATC) has been working towards developing a consciousness of women's issues within its membership, both male and female, at the base and leadership levels. This involves considerable educational work, much of which is based on small-group study of educational materials produced by the ATC Women's Secretariat.

This article looks at excerpts from two pamphlets produced in 1988: Vamos todos con el Convenio Colectivo (Let's All Go With the Collective Agreement) and Vamos todas a conocer nuestros derechos (Women - Let's Get to Know our Rights). The first is aimed at getting union locals to negotiate collective agreements and, in the process, to reflect on the particular conditions faced by women farmworkers. The second pamphlet deals particularly with women's rights and how to defend them. The focus is on both understanding the legal system and developing a consciousness regarding women's oppression.

While each of these materials covers a wide range of topics, both include sections aimed at promoting reflection on issues related to the defense of women's integrity. The two themes shown here are sexual harassment in the work place, and physical and psychological abuse in the home.

These pamphlets are read and discussed in small study groups of workers, often with women only, which are organized in each work centre and coordinated by women farmworkers. These "popular teachers" are trained by activists who have participated in a national workshop organized by the Women's Secretariat. Study is organized into units which can be covered in one day or an afternoon and takes between three to six weeks to complete.

The introduction attempts to get participants to reflect on their lives by looking at pictures, discussing what is shown and answering questions which promote reflection on the particular situation depicted, as well as on their own experiences.

How do women live?

At work:

What problems do these women have to deal with at work?

What other problems do women face at work?

How can we solve these problems?

What type of legal protection do we have?

Outside of work:

What tasks do these women have?

What other responsibilities do we have outside of work?

What difficulties do we face in fulfilling these responsibilities?

How can we solve these problems?

What's happening to this woman?

How do we deal with this situation?

Can women's lives change?

Do we know men who cook?

Why do our husbands not cook?

What do we think of this photo?

How do our husbands participate in childcare?

Who takes care of our children when we have to go out?

What can we do in order to be able to go out when we want to?

After an initial reflection, concepts are defined and clarified. All unillustrated text is written with a relatively large typeface and each line of text is divided where there is a natural pause when spoken, making it easier for new readers to understand. The text is read aloud and discussed by the group.

Photostories not only generate discussion during group study, but also at the moment of taking the photos. Sexual harassment is a delicate subject within the Union and therefore has not been explicitly named in the text, although it is certainly talked about during the reflection process.

Could life be like what is shown in the photos?

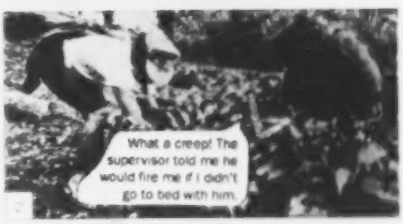
Men and women have **biological differences**, meaning we are **born with bodies that function differently**.
For example, we as women have the possibility to get pregnant.

But there are other differences which are not natural, but come from the different treatment men and women receive since childhood.
Only women are prepared to do the household chores, such as cooking and caring for the children.
But men can also learn these tasks and in many countries they do them.

Wife battery is also not natural and **is produced by an unjust relationship** in which women have the worst deal.

We can change this reality...

Matagalpa, coffee production:



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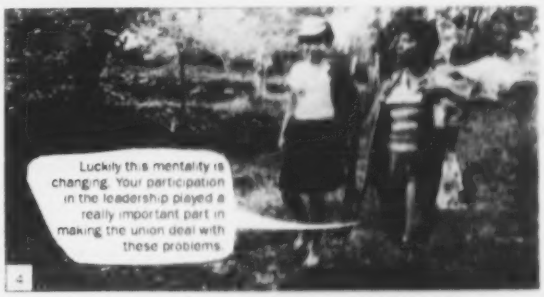
Luckily this mentality is changing. Your participation in the leadership played a really important part in making the union deal with these problems.
4

What support does Migdalia have in this case?

Have we heard of similar cases in our work?

What attitude does our union have towards these problems?

Abuse, although primarily dealt with in relation to wife battery, also covers child beating. (The subject of incest is also included under this same section as part of child abuse.)

Personal testimonies come from grassroots leaders who are known by the participants. Their reflections are concrete, suggesting possibilities for legal defence and pointing out certain difficulties caused by the reactions of women themselves.

The goal of this educational process is, of course, to get people to act. "Even with the difficulties of getting legal defence, it is necessary to make formal complaints about abuse. Many women reject doing this because of the sexist and humiliating attitudes we encounter. We must remember that as we denounce abuse we are changing attitudes, so that abuse is recognized as a problem for everyone and not only as a personal problem."

Secretaría de la Mujer
Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo (ATC)
Casa Nacional, Apartado A-244
Managua, NICARAGUA

Nearly all women from the countryside suffer some degree of abuse from the men we live with and sometimes we also act the same way with our children. **Threats, blows and other forms of physical violence are acts against our integrity....**

"In the internal regulations there's a clause that says that there should be respect in a work centre, that a person who creates a scandal or hits another must be dismissed from work. I believe that we should put this regulation into force."
(Cristina Rodriguez)

"Many women do not come out against abuse and this means double work: convincing the women of what abuse means and convincing the men not to do it."
(Jacinta Prado)

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Norma Virginia Guirola de Herrera

HER EXAMPLE LIVES ON ...

Dear friends,

Our understanding of the nature of the Women's Program's "Solidarity Alert" impels us to take this opportunity to ask that you make an urgent call to denounce the evil and cowardly murder of our General Coordinator, Sra. Norma Virginia Guirola de Herrera, proof of the ongoing violation of human rights in El Salvador. Norma dedicated a large part of her life to work with Salvadorean women. She was committed to the development of gender consciousness and to building a society based on equality and social justice. We also ask that, along with us, you demand an end to the aggression against the women's organizations in our country. Send letters of denunciation and protest to:

Lic. Alfredo Cristiani
Presidente de la República de El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR, C.A.

Coronel René Emilio Ponce
Jefe del Estado Mayor Conjunto
de la Fuerza Armada de El Salvador
Estado Mayor de la Fuerza Armada
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR, C.A.

We would also appreciate receiving copies of the protests:

Instituto de Investigación, Capacitación y
Desarrollo de la Mujer (IMU)
Apartado Postal 1703
San Salvador, EL SALVADOR, C.A.

We hope to be able to count on your solidarity,

Nora Elizabeth de García
Coordinadora General, IMU

On November 12, 1989, 42-year-old Norma Virginia Guirola de Herrera was arrested while attending to wounded civilians, most of whom were women. Her body was found the next day in a city morgue in San Salvador, showing signs of having been cruelly murdered.

Mother of four, Norma was also President and General Coordinator of the Institute for Research, Training and Development of Women (IMU) in San Salvador at the time of her death. Since the age of 18, she had dedicated her life to helping those in need, and in particular to fighting the injustices and discrimination faced by Salvadorean women.

After the founding of the IMU in August 1986, Norma began to organize training programs for women from different sectors, to research and document the socio-economic, cultural and political situation of women in El Salvador, and to analyze the critical role of women in the current Salvadorean crisis. Her enormous capacity and dedication to this work helped the IMU become an important and respected institution, both nationally and internationally.

In the words of her co-workers, Norma was "an advisor in work and always a friend, offering us warm and friendly words in our moments of greatest anguish and weakness. (She) showed in practice the value of humility." In spite of her cruel and unjust death, her example will never die.

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Solidarity Alerts Update

The responses received as a result of the Women's Program solidarity alerts have been encouraging.

Since 1988 when we first undertook to alert our international network about women political prisoners, we have sent out alerts on behalf of South African women political prisoners and detainees; we demanded protection from death-threats on behalf of Women's Program network member Cecilia Olea of the Flora Tristan Centre in Peru; we sent out a call for the immediate release of Lee Young Soon, a woman worker and organizer with the Korean Women Workers Association in South Korea; we also called for international support for the campaign for women's human rights launched by Gabriela, the national women's umbrella organization in the Philippines. This call included a demand for the release of women political prisoners and an end to detention without trial.

Stretching the vision of solidarity action past support for political prisoners, in January of this year we sent out a call to action in solidarity with the Thai women's movement which welcomed the Women's Program delegation at the ICAE World Assembly in Bangkok. Thai women are fighting exploitation by the sex tourism industry and we sent out a call alerting members of the adult education movement that its choice of a conference site near a notorious sex tourist resort beach was in conflict with the work of the Thai women's movement. (For more information, see articles later in this section.)

For those of you who sent letters demanding the release of Lee Young Soon, we have this update: Lee Young Soon was convicted for "violating social order" and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with a three years' suspended sentence. Her supporters are calling for a re-trial.

Lee Young Soon says, "There are many obstacles to overcome but nothing will deter me from seeking women's and workers' liberation." She thanked all the friends abroad who campaigned for her release.

We too would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who responded to our calls for solidarity. We hope you will respond with equal support to join us in condemning the murder of El Salvadorean feminist/activist Norma de Herrera.

Solidarity/Solidarité/Solidaridad

The Women's Program

THE ASIAN WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (AWHRC)

We wanted to introduce you to this newly formed Asian women's solidarity organization, set up to monitor, increase consciousness of and ultimately abolish human rights abuses of women in Asia.

General Purposes of the AWHRC:

- To promote a new understanding of human rights and development from a feminist perspective and in the process, generate new concepts of human rights responsive to the collective rights of peoples and of women.
- To challenge gender subordination and patriarchy and the existing development models which have brought about new and more violent forms of human rights violations on Asian women.
- To provide a focal point and stimulus at the national and regional levels for the advocacy and defence of Asian women's human rights.

Specific Purposes of the AWHRC:

- to encourage documentation of the human rights situation of women in the various Asian countries;
- to ensure the systematic exchange and flow of information to respond to women's human rights violations;
- to provide for concerted action and quick responses in the Asian region, on existing women's human rights violations;
- to encourage the development and implementation of international instruments that promote the elimination of discrimination against women; as well as to make visible the existing human rights violations of Asian women;
- to encourage the drafting of documents such as an Asian Declaration of Women's Human Rights which reflect the experiences as well as the wisdom and vision of Asian women;
- to organize seminars, workshops or consultations that serve as channels or forums for developing a new understanding of human rights and which promote the feminist concern for human rights;
- to undertake networking, and to support and facilitate the organization of AWHRC national network groups wherever feasible in various Asian countries;
- to foster solidarity among women's groups and organizations in the Asian region for the promotion of women's human rights and the collective rights of peoples.

For more information contact:

Nelia Sancho, Regional Coordinator
Asian Women's Human Rights Commission
1832 U.P. Bliss, Diliman
Quezon City

INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES CALL FOR **Solidarity Actions** *with* **Thai Women**

Since the mid-70's, the promotion of tourism in Third World countries has resulted in the mushrooming of support structures in the entertainment business: discos, night clubs, massage parlours, hotels and brothels. Due to increasing unemployment, this industry attracts large numbers of workers, particularly women, who generally have even fewer job opportunities than men, but find that "service" jobs in the entertainment sector require no qualifications, are more readily available and often provide greater income. This type of work usually implies sexual service as well.

The Vietnam war promoted the development of the sex industry in Thailand for American servicemen until the end of the war in 1976. At that point, sex tourism began to be promoted by countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Holland and Japan.

The consequences of sex tourism can include, among other things, various forms of violence and threats of violence, the spread of the HIV virus, and continually worsening labour conditions as the market expands and other forms of the sex industry, such as "mail-order brides", begin to appear.

A group of concerned participants at the International Council for Adult Education's Fourth World Assembly (Bangkok, January 1990) proposed that the Assembly "act on the words and statements heard at this meeting, i.e., that democracy, participation and equality begin at home, in our communities and in the structures of our organizations."

The issue was the international conference Education for All by the Year 2000, which was to be held in March 1990 and would attract over 3,000 participants. The conference, for which an entirely new complex was built, cost roughly US$ 3 to 4 million. The location chosen for the meeting was Jomtien Beach, Thailand, ten minutes away from the village of Pattaya - notorious as a sex tourism resort.

The main concern was not whether any of the individual participants would involve themselves directly as consumers in the sex trade industry, but rather that the selection of the site was contrary to the spirit reflected in the concept of "Education for All" and offensive because the building of a new infrastructure in that zone directly contributes to further expansion of the sex trade industry.

After a public forum and consultation with organizations representing the Thai women's movement, the Women's Caucus agreed to act as an international delegation expressing solidarity with women

organizing against exploitation everywhere. The Caucus prepared a statement and call to action in solidarity with Thai women's concerns which was endorsed by participants of the Assembly. In addition to urging Assembly participants to express their concern about this issue to the organizations that were to be involved in the conference, it was strongly recommended to the sponsoring inter-agency committee (which included the World Bank) that:

- decisions as to location and program content for subsequent meetings be based on a critical awareness and sensitivity to the domestic context;

- programs at such meetings should have as a priority learning about the important issues of the country and region; and

- the human and material resources mobilized to support such meetings should contribute to and support the development programs of the host country, such as the building of community and vocational centres, schools and shelters.

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The International Sex Trade:

A Few Facts about Trafficking in Women

Trafficking in women is a crisis of global dimensions.

Women in the Philippines are sold into prostitution, often as children, for the gratification of American military personnel stationed there. Other Southeast Asian women are transported through organized pimping networks into the brothels and sex shows of Japan, Germany and the United States. Penniless, often illegal aliens, these women become the prisoners of their pimps.

The situation is hardly any better for many women and girls who remain in their native lands. An estimated one million Thai women and girls, in a country of about 32 million people, are believed to be used in the sex trade. In 1984, a fire on the resort island of Phuket left the charred bodies of prostitutes who had been chained to their beds. Small Thai girls are sold to European tourists as "virgin prostitutes," commanding a higher price than the going rate for sexual chattel.

Tours of Japanese and European businessmen are daily flown into South Korea and Thailand for "sex vacations" organized by agencies like Germany's "Rosie Travel," whose brochure states, "Anything goes in this exotic country. Especially when it comes to girls...[1] You can book a trip to Thailand with erotic pleasures included in the price." Airlines, travel agencies, hotels, and pimps take the bulk of the women's earnings - Korean Church Women United estimated that prostitutes receive less than one-thirtieth of the fees their patrons pay.

Another variation of trafficking in women is the sale of "mail-order brides" - young, impoverished women from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines - to men in Western Europe and the United States. Ads for the women are placed in "personal" columns in mainstream newspapers by agencies like the American-owned "Intercontact-Bureau" (ICB), which has a German branch "Speyer."

For the women and girls who are trafficked, the daily reality of the global sex trade is one of rape, child sexual abuse, beatings, torture, imprisonment, and degradation. To the pimps and procurers, their customers, and the businesses and governments that benefit from the sex trade, prostitution and the trafficking of women is sexual entertainment which produces huge and effortless profits.

With few exceptions, the media have contributed to this oppressive reality by advertising "mail-order brides" and sex tours and by presenting prostitution as a glamorous job alternative for women. The Thai government is embarrassed by Bangkok's reputation as the "Brothel of Asia," but it has steadfastly refused to place restrictions on the tourist industry, the country's third largest source of income.

Taken from a document written by Dr. Kathleen Barry, on behalf of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women which has NGO Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
Calder Square Station
P.O. Box 1077, State College
PA 16805-0077, USA

[1] We wish to note here that both sex tourism and the demand for Asian "mail-order brides" reflect and cater to a racist myth that Asian women are among the most submissive in the world. This adds a further ominous dimension to the propaganda used to promote the trafficking in Asian women to Western men.

Voices Rising

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Calling All Women Popular Educators

The former staff of the Women's Program/Popular Education Research Group are developing a resource kit for women activists and educators.

The kit will be a primer on the theory and methodology of popular education and its practical application to a number of areas: violence, health, racism, urban poverty and indigenous self-determination. We intend to use source materials from organizations in our network, which we will adapt for use in our local context through consultation with Toronto activists. In this way, the kit will combine the experience and wisdom of grassroots women's organizations from the international network with the needs and challenges articulated by local women active around common issues.

If you or your group have produced any popular education materials which focus on the areas of:

- empowering women
- violence - social and political
- urban organization
- fighting racism
- indigenous self-determination
- health (especially reproductive, and in particular on AIDS)
- popular education methodology (especially with a gender perspective)
- methodologies of creating alternative and popular media

....then please send us a copy. Anyone who contributes materials for the kit, regardless of whether the materials are used in the final product, will be sent a free copy of the finished *Popular Education Resource Kit for Women Educators and Organizers*.

If you want more information about the kit please write to:

PERG
606 Shaw Street
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6G 3L6

CEAAL

Canada

At the Women's Research Centre we were very glad to establish contact with *Voices Rising*. As a feminist organization concerned with making our work accessible and relevant to women's groups both in Canada and internationally, *Voices Rising*'s role of facilitating links among all of us working for women is an extremely important one.

The Women's Research Centre began in 1973. Our aim is to work with women who do not normally have access to research facilities. Our focus is action research - research which is not distanced, which is rooted in women's description of their experience, and which is intended to promote action to change society. Much of our work has focussed on the issue areas of women and the economy, violence against women, institutional change, and methods of research evaluation and education.

For the past few years we have been drawing upon the experience of those working in the field of popular education. Even before that, however, our work was based on many of the same principles and techniques that are now called popular education - in particular the need to be consciously grounded in women's experience and to undertake research and education with the goal of social, political and economic change.

Two WRC resources that might be of particular interest to *Voices Rising*'s readers are *Action Research for Women's Groups* and *An Evaluation Guide for Women's Groups*. Also, we are currently working on a project called *Strategies for Change: a Workbook Based on Women's Experience*. Two parts of the workbook will be available in June 1990: Part One: "Learning From our Experience" and Part Two: "Legislative Change and the Equality Framework." A complete listing of WRC publications is available on request.

We look forward to the continued sharing of resources and experience with women's groups in Canada and internationally.

Debra J. Lewis
Research Associate
Women's Research Centre
101 - 2245 West Broadway
Vancouver, British Columbia
CANADA V6K 2E4

Panama

We are a team of women who have been working in the area of popular education for six years. Our major efforts go towards training sessions, talks, courses, workshops and periodic study groups with women from different sectors. In addition, we publish posters and articles for women who work as group coordinators or animators.

This year we are creating a Women's Support Centre which will be able to attend to the needs of battered women and offer legal aid, psychological support and social assistance to grassroots women. We would appreciate any information which can help to orient us and support our work. In addition to informative material, we need contacts with other organizations and reference centres, and training opportunities in these fields.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Mercedes Cumberbatch
Coordinadora
Programa de la Mujer
Departamento Nacional de
Pastoral Social y Caritas
Apto. 1149, Zona 9A
Panama City,
PANAMA

U.S.A.

Women, Poverty and Economic Power

A project for women who want to address economic problems and work for social change

The Nationwide Women's Program of the American Friends Service Committee is offering a series of pilot workshops on economic literacy. These provide women from any region [within the U.S.] with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the complex world economy in which we participate and to develop strategies for action.

The goal of the workshop is to bring together a group of 20 to 25 women to:

- examine their own place in the economy
- learn basic economic principles
- better understand causes of poverty and wealth
- include social and psychological dimensions of economic oppression
- examine how racism and sexism shape and obscure views on economics
- deepen and share understanding about a specific issue of focus - housing, social services/welfare, or employment;
- analyze connections between other political and social issues, considering the U.S. as a part of the world economy
- use these skills to begin strategizing for continuing action and reflection.

For more information write to:

Nationwide Women's Program
American Friends Service Committee
1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA
19102 USA

Peru

Our First Women's Bookstore Is On Its Way

The 1985 opening of the Centre for Documentation and Information about Women (Centro de Documentación e Información sobre la Mujer) resulted from our belief that information is power. Since then, thousands of interested people have come to research and read articles, testimonies, research papers, etc. which give a rich and complex vision of women.

Over the years, we have significantly expanded the volume of reference material in the Centre (presently 7,500 titles) and have improved service through automation.

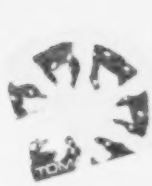
This year, the situation of increasing poverty and violence in our country has led us to take on a more dynamic role. We are also searching out and promoting links with those who influence women's lives - journalists, politicians, professionals and popular women's organizations - in order to provide them with information which can help them orient their activities and understand our points of view. Part of this campaign is the Women's Bookstore project.

Despite the achievements of the feminist movement and the many years it has existed in our country, we still do not have a place where we can sell the enormous quantity of information which has been produced in recent years and which is greatly demanded by the general public. We also hope that this space will be a useful commercial outlet for women's organizations which have production projects.

Women interested in supporting this initiative can help by sending us a collection of your materials (books, pamphlets, posters, cards and, in general, small objects which can be sent by mail and sold at under $10.00) which will be sold on consignment in our centre.

Centro de Documentación e
Información Sobre la Mujer
Av. Arenales 2626, piso 3
Lima 14, PERU

Mexico



Looking Before We Leap: *Union Women Share Tools of Analysis*

Factory and government workers, nurses, teachers and university professors - 54 women unionists and supporters met for a weekend to learn to do "análisis de la coyuntura," that is, to learn to analyze the context in which they are organizing in order to make better action decisions and foresee the consequences.

The workshop opened with women sharing when and how their organizations make such analysis. A nurse from the movement to democratize the Health Workers Unions said: "We only stop to evaluate what's going on when there are problems. For example, thousands of us had been marching in the streets and then the government fired hundreds of nurses. That's when we finally stopped to analyze our situation. We hadn't foreseen the firings. We were scared and didn't know what to do."

The coordinators helped the group define six questions necessary for analyzing one's context:

1. What has happened? What have been the key events?
2. Where have events taken place?
3. Who are the key actors?
4. What forces are at play? Who is supporting whom?
5. What actions are we going to take? Who will participate?
6. What will be the consequences of these actions?

Participants then divided into small groups to describe specific cases once they had analyzed their context.

In one group, a woman from the Department of Agriculture Workers Union described the steps her union had taken before deciding to carry out a hunger strike in response to the lay-off of 10,000 workers.

"First we had to figure out exactly what was happening. Then at the first sign that we could be laid off, we held a general assembly to see how many were affected and to figure out what to do. We analyzed the actions of the government authorities and the corrupt leadership of our union—they, along with the rank-and-file, were the principal actors in that struggle. We had to ask ourselves: What forces are at play? Do we really have the rank and file on our side? What has happened in the past? Would the government intervene? Was the lay-off part of a national strategy?

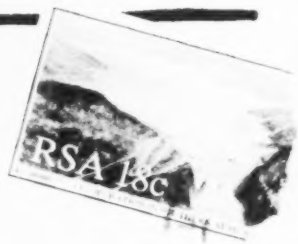
"We then began to look at our options for action and the possible consequences. We held several marches, and gained the support of other unions. When we saw that negotiations were going nowhere, we felt the need to take more drastic measures and decided to hold a hunger strike. The results were dramatic. After 45 days with good press coverage and public support, we won back all 10,000 jobs."

Once all the experiences shared in small groups had been summarized in plenary, women concluded that most were already doing analysis, although generally without dedicating much time to the process of taking into account larger factors such as the economic crisis, industrial modernization, elections, etc. Women agreed that it is important that the rank and file be involved in the process so that everyone can understand the various factors necessary for making key decisions. Women also felt that, as working women, they need to do analysis from a women's perspective, because of the particular factors - husbands, children, domestic responsibilities - that affect women's participation.

This is the first time that women from independent unions and democratic movements within government-controlled unions have come together to look at their experiences and learn new methods of analysis. Future weekend workshops will include how to further democratic processes within unions and how to ensure women's participation in decision-making.

- *Mujer a Mujer/Correspondencia*
A.P. 24-553, Colonia Roma
06701 Mexico D.F., MEXICO

South Africa



A Call for Linkages and Printed Materials

The International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG) is based in Cape Town, and produces educational materials for shop stewards and others in the labour and mass democratic movements to promote a vision and understanding of international labour solidarity.

ILRIG provides educational workshops, a computerized resource library and has also produced booklets in a series entitled *Workers of the World* (seven titles, three in three languages, one more in the pipeline). As well, ILRIG provides internships for students and trains members of popular organizations in educational methods, research methodology and writing skills.

We are interested in collecting more information on women workers, and particularly in making links with groups of women workers all over the world—most especially in Asia and Eastern Europe. Please get in touch. Also write if you are interested in the booklet series *Workers of the World* or ILRIG's new magazine *Workers' World*.

International Labour Research and Information Group
P.O. Box 213, Salt River
Cape Town 7925, SOUTH AFRICA

Philippines

Mindanao, aside from being the second major island of the Philippines, is also the stage of cultural heterogeneity and variations. National minority Filipinos who, in resistance to western colonialism preserve a great portion of their rites and traditions, constitute a significant percentage of the population. The lowland settler Filipinos, who imbibed the colonial, the neo-colonial and for an increasing number the nationalist culture, on the other hand, also play front-line roles in a new wave of cultural assertion.

The Mindanao Community Theatre Network was formally named and instituted in 1984 after a painstaking process of more than ten years, and after several leaderships and predecessors came and went.

As a direction, it is a forum to systematize into pedagogical prescriptions the cultural thrusts and orientations of its member groups—either a theatre for awakening-action-and-organization of the people or a theatre to instill a tradition of dramaturgy that is Filipino by heritage and liberating by effect. Furthermore, integral to its heritage-building is the development of indigenous traditions in order to draw in the tribal Filipinos' struggle for self-determination in its leading capacity.

As a body, it rakes into its ranks more than sixty groups, organizations and cultural institutions represented by a good number of theatre artists, community educators and organizers. Among its members are practitioners from the sectors of the peasantry, the workers, the students and out-of-school youths, the professionals and even established personalities in the field of education and art.

As for its running, a coordinated body facilitates the managing of its programs and projects. Secretariat back-up is provided by a consortium of established member or partner institutions based in different key centres of Mindanao.

Mindanao Community Theatre Network
P.O. Box 146, Davao City 8000
PHILIPPINES

Malaysia

We first came together as women concerned about the sufferings of fellow women. Women beaten by the men they live with. Women raped. Women sexually harassed. And the media exploitation of women's bodies. For the first time in March 1985 we, a group of women, broke the silence and ended the invisibility of such violence and abuse suffered by women. Thus began the public campaign against violence towards women in Malaysia.

We are AWAM. We are part of an organization of women dedicated to creating awareness and developing consciousness among women of the dignity and rights of women, as enunciated by the United Nations General Assembly in 1975.

We believe in: promoting mutual understanding and friendship among women; building support for women; providing a voice for women to speak out for themselves; recognizing and establishing the human dignity of both women and men as a basic human right; abolishing all discrimination based on sex, race or creed.

We aspire to be: a movement of women who together discover and fulfill our dignity, equality and freedom in the daily realities of our lives; a movement of action and formation; a movement that is of service to women; a movement that represents women who are united and with support will be able to confront structures and systems that stop us women from being whole persons.

Our activities are: sharing our experiences as women; understanding women's position in society; knowing our bodies, keeping our health; campaigning for legal reforms pertaining to violence against women; giving talks, holding exhibitions, organizing seminars; developing skills - public speaking, leadership, chairing meetings; meeting with other women and organizations.

AWAM
All Women's Action Society
c/o 43 C Jalan SS6/12
47301 Kelana Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan
Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Bangladesh

It's really a great pleasure for me seeing such a nice and confident magazine on women. As an activist, may I join in your network either on behalf of our organization or as an individual? The organization I have been working with is a national, non-governmental organization called Proshika. The name means Training, Education and Work with and of the People. The organization organizes village and urban landless, marginal farmers and other low paid occupational groups, and supports them in their human development through various support services aimed at their eventually taking charge of their own development. Yes, of course half of the nation is women. The organization addresses equality issues and issues that oppress women in our society. We have been organizing to make broader unity so that they can confront oppression, and unite in protest against low wages, divorce or mistreatment of wives, etc.

Anyway, I intend to write in your magazine. I think I will learn a lot from the sisters from the countries far off from my small country. I would be happy if I can do anything for them and can share their experiences of work, ideas as well as the *Voices Rising* magazine. Strong support and love,

Tahmara, Proshika
d/2, 10 Balroad
Mohammadpur
Dhaka, BANGLADESH

India

Thanking you very much for your kind letter and booklet. I understand that the problems of Latin American women are similar to Indian women. Indian women in villages believe that men are superior and they have to give respect to them. This is because of illiteracy and innocence. We have to be collectively solving the problems of women, but all the organizations in the Federation are very poor in implementing the women's programs. The following are the organizations: Speak India, Masses, ONSSSS, Aeros, Jagrithi and others. We are all collectively decided to get some training to women organizers and the SEARCH, a women's organization in Bangalore, is prepared to give training.

Through our adult education women's centres we are encouraging our village women - working class - to demand equal wages with men for the same work in agriculture. We are also encouraging our women to discuss their problems with groups and get solutions. We are basically helping our women to get more awareness and to understand the society by adult education.

We are trying to get more contact with other organizations. We have opened five adult education centres for women exclusively in villages and plan to start another 20 shortly. Our secretary is going to participate in a statewide seminar on women's issues in the next month. We are trying our best to strengthen ourselves by participating in the women's movement in the country. We will be happy if we receive more information. Today is our new Year (Ugadi) a famous festival for Teluges people. Wishing you with Telugu new year greetings.

Rural Aids Service Organization
Buijayasarthik
Sri Devi Nilayam
Lake View Colony
Podalakur Road
Nellore 4, INDIA

Australia

I am one of the education and training workers here at Healthsharing Women and as part of our work we conduct training programs. My own educational philosophy has been influenced strongly by Freire and feminism. For some ten years I worked in the international development network in Australia conducting workshops on racism, sexism, world trade, nuclear issues, etc. The transition to women's health, some two years ago, has been exciting.

Women's health has become a very significant issue here in Victoria and women are becoming very organized and determined about having their concerns heard and needs met. One of the main focusses of our education and training work is providing skills training to health and community workers and community women who want to conduct workshops and information sessions on women's health.

As I move around the networks I will publicize your organization and *Voices Rising*, particularly with Kooris (aboriginal Australians), women's networks and solidarity groups.

In solidarity

Marian Bohan, Healthsharing
Fifth Floor, Information Victoria Centre
318 Little Bourke Street
Melbourne 3000
Victoria, AUSTRALIA

from Healthsharing Women's Education and Training Philosophy

A number of principles inform our work in Education and Training—in workshops, seminars, training and resource development. We believe that:

1. Education is never value-free. The values and beliefs we have affect our work. We work from a commitment to feminist principles and from a class analysis.

2. As women, we have different experiences of health and the health system. Our different experiences are created by such things as our culture, our ethnicity, our socio-economic class, our age, our physical abilities, geographic location and sexual preference.

3. Political education promotes change. Our purpose is to sensitize women to the social, political, and economic factors which underlie our social structure. We encourage them to create new systems. We are working towards the redistribution of power, skills and resources.

4. The learning process is as important as the content. Women need the opportunity to participate in education that is practical, creative, varied and enjoyable - in fact fun! We can share and acknowledge the value of our own knowledge and experience, using experts as an added resource when needed.

5. Learning needs to take place within a comfortable setting and promote an environment of trust, acceptance, sharing, vulnerability and challenge. This gives women the opportunities to build new friendships and networks.

Canada

Opening of the Latin American Women's House in Toronto

We would like to announce the opening of La Casa de Ña Juana, a Latin American Women's House in Toronto.

As a minority group in a "developed" society, Latin American women face triple oppression: as a class, as a race and as a gender. We are obliged to work in low-paying jobs with exploitative conditions. No matter where we are, we are continually having to deal with racist attitudes. As women, we are subjected to a double workday made all the more difficult without the support of the extended family, which in our countries of origin is always close by. In addition to this triple oppression, we suffer from culture shock, which profoundly affects our lives as well as those of our families.

A group of Latin American women from one of the poorest neighborhoods in Toronto came together to try to find solutions to these problems. We have decided to open a centre which can be used to generate ideas, develop and carry out projects, and respond to the concerns of women. For example: Spanish literacy courses, a Spanish documentation centre about women, cultural activities, self-help groups, workshops about violence, support activities for women living in shelters, and the creation of a cooperative which generates work through the sale of handicrafts made by women in Latin America and Toronto.

We would like to invite women's groups which produce articles for sale (textiles, ceramics, leather goods, silver work, wall hangings, etc.) to contact us to discuss the possibility of having their goods sold through the centre.

We are also interested in establishing links with other organizations and beginning a dialogue. We would like to exchange publications and other types of educational material (in Spanish) in order to develop our documentation centre.

Please send us materials that you have produced, in exchange for information and material from feminist organizations and women in Canada.

Many of you know me from correspondence you may have had with the ICAE Women's Program and *Voices Rising*. You can now contact me and the other women involved with the Women's House at:

Ruth Lara
La Casa de Ña Juana / Ña Juana's Place
1363 Queen St. East, Unit 20
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M4L 1X7

Nigeria

Thank you for sending me copies of *Voices Rising*. I regret that I had much work that hindered my answering your questionnaire immediately.

I found the *Voices Rising* bulletin to have valuable experiences taken from all nooks and corners of the world. The bulletin is a great weapon used for initiating women and democratic educators and activists to struggle for the betterment of women's world and make conducive social surroundings.

My friends and colleagues were very, very impressed with *Voices Rising* after reading it from page to page without skipping over any of the articles. And they promised helping me so we can contribute by sending letters and short articles on our work, though we do not have a specific women's program.

God bless women's groups; God bless *Voices Rising*. By putting and sharing efforts for our freedom God will surely lead us through. So let's all stand up and fight for freedom all the way. Thank you for including me in your mailing list. With best wishes for your success.

In solidarity,

Tina Marie Adamu
Centre for Adult Education and Extension Services
Ahmadu Bello University
Zaria Kaduna State, NIGERIA

Caribbean Region

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) was formally founded on April 2, 1985 at an all-day meeting in Barbados of forty feminists and women activists from the region.

It emerged as an autonomous umbrella association out of the increasing realization among individual women and women's organizations of the need for regional cooperation and networking. Membership in CAFRA - which has continued to grow from year to year - now spans the Dutch, English, French and Spanish-speaking Caribbean. There are National Representatives in almost all territories where there are members.

Members of CAFRA are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression of women and other forms of exploitation in the society, and to working actively for change. We define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. Membership is open to women living in the Caribbean and Caribbean women living outside who support CAFRA's aims and objectives. Current research/action projects being undertaken include "Women in Caribbean Agriculture" (in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Commonwealth of Dominica and Belize); "Women's History and Creative Expression" (regional); "Women and the Law" (regional); and the compilation and co-publishing of *Creation Fire: A CAFRA Anthology of Caribbean Women's Poetry* with SisterVision Press in Toronto.

The Association also produces a quarterly newsletter, *CAFRA News*. Its main purposes are to: inform members and other interested persons about the activities and programs of the Association; provide a forum for discussions and debate on key issues of concern to women in the regions; promote the sharing of experiences and foster links among individual feminists, activists and women's organizations; assist in breaking down language barriers in the region; stimulate women's creative expression; and contribute to the development of the women's movement regionally and internationally.

A small newsletter team works on its production, which has gone from a 12-page stencilled version in 1987 to 32 pages in 1990 produced in-house in two language versions (Spanish and English) using desk-top publishing. For more information about CAFRA and *CAFRA News*, contact:

CAFRA
P.O. Box 442, Tunapuna Post Office
Tunapuna , TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Tel. (809) 663-8670
Fax (809) 662-4414, Attention CAFRA

North America

A month has passed since our meetings in Bangkok - a month and many miles. It has been challenging to come back from the mountaintop and figure out how to use what was seen, heard & felt there. I've been anxious to be back in touch with you all to see what you're thinking about in terms of developing our own network of popular educators in North America.

I've brought back our discussions to the group of Mexican and North American women here that I'm a part of. We've been doing women's and popular Mexico-U.S. connecting since 1983 - first in the context of feminist and grassroots women's organizations, then in the context of building relationships between specific urban, labour, indigenous and lesbian organizations on both sides. Now we are entering a phase in which we are working to be more conscious about international exchange as a "popular education" experience - in which activists confront their own context, objectives and activities with activists living out a similar commitment in a different context - providing a needed chance for reflection, and for developing a vision of the international context in which we do our local work.

All that to say that we as a group are very interested in working towards the further developing of an active network of popular educators in North America. It would provide a space in which to reflect on our own work, as well as a larger network through which folks we've been working with could maintain a process of follow-up. These turbulent times make spaces for deep and lively reflection together with folks from a variety of movements more necessary than ever.

What we could do in support is:

- get the word to the women we've been working with, who are primarily involved in urban, labour, anti-violence & lesbian organizing
- participate in the development of the methodology of conferences or workshops
- participate in periodic meetings to keep the process moving
- make phone calls or send bulk mailings
- work with others towards getting funding (i.e., proposal-writing, though we ourselves aren't in touch with likely prospects)
- promote women's networking - a gender and international perspective as an integral part of building the North American region.

Our little group is committed to supporting the building of this network -however, we need to be thrifty in our use of resources, attending regional meetings when necessary, and keeping in touch in other ways when we can't make it.

Elaine Burns
Correspondencia/Mujer a Mujer
A.P. 24-553, Colonia Roma
06701 Mexico, D.F. MEXICO

Resources

Women and Peace

Equality, Participation, Development

JUNIC/NGO Programme Group on Women

This is the fifth of a series of kits on the theme "Advancement of Women." The Women and Peace kit is a study kit intended to facilitate education and action towards the creation of a secure world. It deals with the interdependence between the promotion of peace and the advancement of women, and the interrelationships between these and the major global issues which affect the struggle for world security and human rights.

Other kits available in the series are: Women and Disability; Women, Health and Development; The Key to Development: Women's Social Role; and Women and Shelter.

Available in English, French and Spanish from: United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva, 10, Switzerland.

Hopeful Openings:

A Study of Five Women's Development Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean

By Sally W. Yudelman
International Center for Research on Women
Overseas Development Council
Kumarian Press, 1987, 127 pp.

The woman-centred organizations studied in this book are: Centro de Orientación de la Mujer Obrera, Mexico; Federación Hondureña de Mujeres Campesinas, Honduras; Federación de Organizaciones Voluntarias, Costa Rica; Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana, Inc., Dominican Republic; Women and Development Unit, Extra-Mural Department, University of the West Indies, Barbados. Two of these groups are grassroots movements, two are service organizations run by women professionals, and one is a university-based organization that provides some services but mainly works to influence government policy on women in development planning.

The study analyzes the history, work and structure of the five organizations, noting strengths and weaknesses, particularly in relation to problems and constraints. The significant role of donor agencies is examined; the book ends with an appendix, "A Note to Donors," that summarizes consistent funding problems and makes strong recommendations about the kinds of support that would be most helpful to women's organizations.

Available from: Kumarian Press, 630 Oakwood Avenue, Suite 119, West Hartford, Connecticut, 06110-1505, USA. US$15.95.

The Global Factory

Analysis and Action for a New Economic Era

by Rachel Kamel, 94 pp.

As a practical guide to the international economy, *The Global Factory* explores the worldwide movement of jobs, focussing on the impact these changes have on ordinary working people in both the United States and the Third World, in particular Mexico and the Philippines.

The Global Factory was jointly developed by two AFSA programs, the Maquiladora Project and the Women and Global Corporations Project. It is designed as a resource for education and action, and is directed to labour activists and educators, teachers, community groups and women's organizations. It includes a resource list (with ordering information) as well as contact information for groups whose work is described in the book.

Available from: American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19102-1479, USA.

Participatory Training for Women

Edited by Mona Daswani, Mirai Chatterjee, Suneeta Dhar and Atreyee Cordeiro, 151 pp.

In December 1987 a group of women trainers from 14 different organizations in India met for a three-day workshop in Delhi to explore the issues involved in training poor illiterate and semi-literate women at the grassroots level. The case studies and analyses presented in this book grew out of that workshop and are part of the ongoing search for a gender-sensitive framework for Participatory Training, an approach that aims at empowerment through a collective learning process, but which has not generally distinguished women from the broad category of "learners." A gender-sensitive framework and method addresses itself not only to women's realities but also their particular learning styles and perceptions.

Available from: The Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 45 Sainik Farm, Khanpur, New Delhi-110062, India.

Women and Development:

The Effects of Militarization

Sponsored by the Labrador Native Women's Association, Sheshatshiu Women's Group, and Mokami Status of Women Council, 48 pp.

This is a detailed report of a conference held in Labrador, Canada in May 1989. The Native peoples of Labrador are opposed to the Canadian government's plan to allow a NATO base to be built in that region. This conference brought together local activists and international guests to discuss the effects of militarized development on communities and especially women, to analyze the situation in Labrador and to strategize/develop an alternate vision of development. The conference report will be useful to people interested in the issue of militarization, but also to anyone planning a participatory workshop/conference. It provides concrete details about the agenda and workshop process, and includes all the comments brainstormed by participants during evaluations and group strategy sessions. This is a conference report through which the participants' voices speak, in all their diversity.

Available from: St. John's - Oxfam, P.O. Box 18000, St. John's, Newfoundland, A1C 6C2, Canada. $5.00.

Strategies and Innovations in Nonformal Education for Women

ASPBAE Courier No. 46

This edition of the *Courier* contains papers which were presented at a conference organized by ASPBAE in November 1988 that brought together women involved in nonformal education throughout Asia and the Pacific. The papers look at the situation of women's education in China, Thailand, the Philippines, Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong.

The *Courier* is produced three times a year by the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education. Subscriptions are US$10.00 (individuals) and US$40.00 (institutions) for residents of ASPBAE countries, and US$20.00 (individuals) and US$60.00 (institutions) for everyone else. It may be possible to obtain single copies of this issue on women.

Available from: ASPBAE, GPO Box 1225, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia.

Abused?

We have the keys
Tenemos las llaves

For ten years, the Women's Program at the Centre for Spanish-Speaking People in Toronto, Canada, has been working on the issue of violence against women. Based on this experience and due to the lack of public educational materials in Spanish, they have now developed a kit for the use of community workers. The materials, which have been published in both Spanish and English, include a guide for counsellors, a booklet for women "survivors" of wife assault, a poster and four fact sheets with legal information (relevant to Canadian law).

Available from: Centre for Spanish-Speaking People, 1004 Bathurst St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 3G7. $5.00.

In the Shadows of the Sun

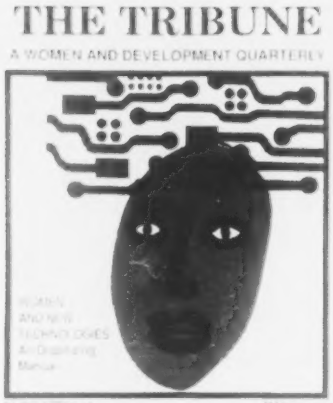
Caribbean Development Alternatives and U.S. Policy

Coordinated by Carmen Diana Deere
Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America (PACCA)
Westview Press, 1990

This book is the product of two years' work by a PACCA team of Caribbean scholars and U.S. experts on the region. PACCA is an association which aims to promote humane and democratic alternatives to present U.S. policy toward Central America and the Caribbean. *In the Shadows of the Sun* pays special attention to the experience of women, as a way of linking international policies to their consequences at the level of the poorest household. The book includes facts, figures and analysis on a variety of issues, and recommends development strategies and an alternative U.S. policy.

PACCA has also produced an eight page summary of the book in tabloid form. It presents the key findings and recommendations to a broad audience.

Both the book and the tabloid summary available from: Central American Resource Center, PO Box 2327, Austin, Texas, USA 78768.



The Tribune: A Women and Development Quarterly

Newsletter #44: Women and New Technologies — An Organizing Manual

by Joanne Sandler
Jointly produced by International Women's Tribune Centre and World YWCA

The Tribune is a quarterly newsletter which reports on women and development issues. Issues are based on themes such as "Women and Water: Who Decides?" (#43), "Making Connections: Economics and Women's Lives" (#42), and "Women and Housing" (#39).

This issue is the outgrowth of an international meeting, "Women and New Technologies", held September 18-29, 1989 in the Netherlands. The manual reports on the issues explored during the 10 days, which include appropriate technology, biotechnology, communications technology, nuclear technology, office technology and reproductive technology. It has been designed as a resource guide for organizing, and aims to stimulate interest and action.

Available from: International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA. Individual Issues: US$3.00.

Colección de Metodologías Participativas

(Collection of Participatory Methodologies)

Produced by Taller Piret with the support of the Program of Education for Participation (PEP) of OEF International

This series has been written for Spanish-speaking educators, social workers and grassroots leaders interested in developing a more participatory approach to their educational work. The collection includes six easy-to-understand booklets, each with between 15 to 20 pages, containing information related to participatory education and its application within the community. The pamphlets, which progressively build upon each other, include information related to carrying out an analysis of the community's needs, developing educational materials and organizing educational encounters.

Much of the groundwork for this series was carried out by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel in their book *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Organizers* (Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984), which was published in English only.

Available in Spanish only from: OEF International, 1815 H Street NW, Washington D.C., USA. For more information contact: Taller Piret, Casilla 1107, Correo 22, Santiago, Chile.

RESOURCES

Publications from OEF International

OEF International is a non-profit organization which focuses on creating economic opportunities for women in the Third World and expanding their contribution to the development of their communities and country.

The first two books, from a series entitled *Appropriate Business Skills for Third World Women*, draw on years of field experience in Third World countries and include participatory educational activities at the basic literacy level for women who wish to start a small business or increase profits. They are available in English, Spanish and French, and are soon to be published in Arabic.

Doing a Feasibility Study

Training Activities for Starting or Reviewing a Small Business

Edited by Suzanne Kindervatter, 1987, 172 pp.

Written for women interested in starting or changing a business, this book contains activities which teach the steps involved in carrying out a feasibility study, and consolidates them by actually conducting one. Notes for the facilitator on how to best use the manual are included.

English US$16.00, Spanish or French US$17.00.

Marketing Strategy

Training Activities for Entrepreneurs

by Suzanne Kindervatter with Maggie Range, 1986, 96 pp.

Designed for women with existing businesses, this publication aims at providing ways to solve problems and increase profits. Its numerous activities include an innovative board game introducing the key aspects of marketing: product, distribution, promotion and price. Playing "Marketing Mix" requires few literacy skills and teaches principles which are then applied through examining their own businesses.

English US$13.50, Spanish or French US$15.50.

Learning to Teach

Training of Trainers for Community Development

by Jane Vella, 1989, 80 pp.

This is a step-by-step guide to designing and leading a training of trainers workshop. The 25 sessions outlined here enable workshop participants to learn and use the concepts and techniques of participatory training for community development. Topics covered include How Adults Learn; Using Pictures, Sociodramas, Stories and Found Objects; Feedback; and Evaluation of Learning.

US$12.50 + $2.50 shipping and handling

All books available from: OEF International, Publications, 1815 H St., NW, 11th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20006, USA.

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Moving On: Education in Organising

Committee for Asian Women (CAW), 1990, 59 pp.

In June 1989, an 8-day regional workshop held in Seoul, Korea, brought together 40 organizers of women workers from 11 Asian countries with the purpose of sharing organizing and educational methodology. The women came from a variety of backgrounds, both in terms of work context and cultural-linguistic background. *Moving On: Education in Organising* is a summary of this meeting and its highlights which includes information about the work presently being carried out as well as ideas and suggestions for its further development.

The Committee for Asian Women also publishes a quarterly - *Asian Women Workers Newsletter* - which reports on the struggles of Asian women industrial workers; as well, CAW distributes several other publications about issues concerning women workers in Asian countries.

Available from: Committee for Asian Women, 57 Peking Road 4/F, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Materials about Bolivian Women Miners

Centro de Promoción Minera (CEPROMIN - Centre for the Promotion of Mining)

An important part of CEPROMIN's work is the production of educational materials for and about Bolivian miners, especially materials which help to promote the participation of women miners.

"Comité de Amas de Casa" (Housewives' Committee) is part of a series of educational materials entitled *Cuadernos Populares* (Popular Notebooks) designed for use at the grassroots level. This pamphlet, written in comic book style, has been written with the aim of informing women miners about the housewives' committee, its history, its purpose, its structure and its relationship with the union.

This and other publications are available in Spanish only from: CEPROMIN, Casilla 7832, La Paz, Bolivia.

Community-Based Education

Two Special Issues of Harvard Educational Review

Part I: Volume 59, No. 4 (November, 1989)
Part II: Volume 60, No.1 (February, 1990)

These two recent issues of the *Harvard Educational Review* contain a number of articles of interest. Most of the articles look at community education initiatives within the USA: education among native Americans, workplace literacy within unions, and community involvement in specific issues. One article, by Eva Young and Mariwilda Padilla (Part II), discusses the formation and operation of the Massachusetts-based group "Mujeres Unidas en Accion" (Women United in Action), which offers educational programs to low-income Latina women in the community.

There is also an international focus, found in articles about education programs that have developed in South Africa, El Salvador, and in Palestinian communities in response to the intifadeh. Part II has a special section on popular education in Chile. Some articles are in Spanish.

Single copies available from: Harvard Educational Review, Gutman Library, Suite 349, 6 Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138-3752 USA.

Environment and Pacific Women

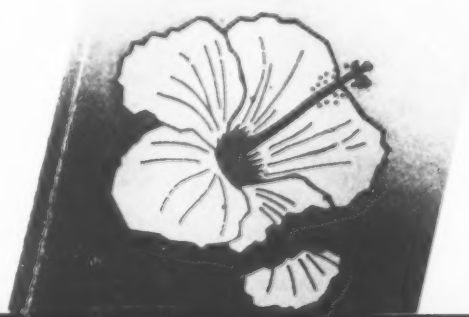
From the Globe to the Village

Edited by Leatuailevao Ruby Va'a and Joan Martin Teaiwa, 41 pp.

The Second Biennial Conference of the Fiji Association of Women Graduates (FAWG) was organized around the issue of the effect of the changing environment on the lives of women. This book is based primarily on the presentations of six women who participated in the conference and who work in fields related to rural development, healthcare, energy resources, the legal system and sociology.

The issues described include the effects on women of male-dominated agricultural development programs, health risks posed by a changing environment, the effects of social and environmental changes on the lives of urban women, violence against women and its social effects, appropriate technology and the effect of global environmental changes on the region.

Available from: The Fiji Association of Women Graduates, PO Box 13495, Suva, Fiji.



Call for Solidarity

OKA IS ALL OF US

The Women's Program stands in solidarity with the indigenous peoples of the Americas in their struggles for self-determination and against colonialism in all its present-day forms. Major colonizer governments (such as Spain, France, England, Canada, the U.S.) are gearing up to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' "discovery" of "America" in 1492. What we should all be celebrating is not 500 years of domination but 500 years of resistance and survival.

Recently in Canada we have witnessed a clear indication of our government's unwillingness to break with its shameful tradition of colonialism; and at the same time we have witnessed the refusal of Native peoples to suffer the daily indignities of domination.

At dawn on July 11, 1990 police attacked a barricade erected by Mohawk people on their traditional land near Oka, Quebec. The Mohawks were defending their land base against development interests. They refuse to recognize the jurisdiction of either the state of Canada or the province of Quebec over themselves as a nation.

Despite the police attack, the Mohawk barricade held, as did another barricade erected in sympathy by a neighbouring Mohawk community. The police, supported by local white racists, laid seige to the barricades. Although the Mohawks were victorious in stopping the land development, the government refused to negotiate around sovereignty and demanded the unconditional surrender of the Mohawk Warriors who were maintaining the barricades. Eventually the government of Quebec called in the Canadian Army - tanks, helicopters, searchlights and all - to continue the siege, which lasted for more than two months. Faced with a deadlock

in negotiations and the possibility of the deaths of Mohawk people, the Mohawk Warriors, Women and Children declared a unilateral termination of hostilities on September 26.

On September 25, 1990 Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney declared: '...Native self-government does not now and cannot ever mean sovereign independence.'

This statement is a declaration of Canada's intent to keep Native Nations, peoples, and their territories in a perpetual state of colonialism and domination. This position leaves us all with but one course of action—the liberation of our nations and peoples.

The siege [at Oka] has been only one battle in the long struggle that lies before us. Rather than a defeat it has been a victory on many fronts. First, we have the victory of the unity of Native people across this vast land. From coast to coast our peoples have been inspired by the heroic stand at [Oka] and have been moved to action in support. Secondly we have moved the international community to recognize the hypocrisy of Canada, and rethink its image as a defender of democracy and minority rights. Canada has been a "settler state" not unlike South Africa in its repression of indigenous rights and peoples.

[The stand at Oka]...is the beginning, not the end. Now, more than ever, we need to reaffirm our unity and our commitment to move forward to the day when our nations regain their rightful place in the world community.

Haudenosaunee Crisis Committee

The Women's Program staff call on our network of women popular educators and organizers to learn and share with others this truth about Canada's continuing colonial relation to the indigenous peoples of this land. We call for solidarity with the Mohawk people and other First Nations. And we urge network members in countries that are organizing these 500th anniversary celebrations to raise an opposing voice.

Celebrate Survival not Domination; call for Recovery, not Discovery.

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Indigenous struggles for
self-determination:
500 years of resistance
and survival

Recovery not Discovery

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